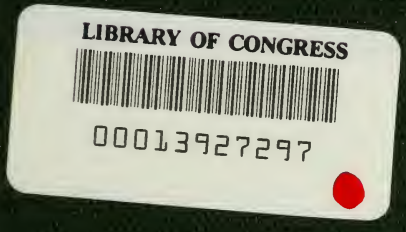
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# THE EVENING BOOK.

# THE EVENING BOOK.

BY

MRS. C. M. KIRKLAND.

CONVERSATION.

Charles Scribner.—New York

391

# THE EVENING BOOK:

OR,

## FIRESIDE TALK

ON

MORALS AND MANNERS, WITH SKETCHES OF WESTERN LIFE.

1872

BY

Caroline M. Stansbury

MRS. KIRKLAND,
AUTHOR OF "A NEW HOME," "HOLIDAYS ABROAD," ETC.

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# PREFACE.

We are asked sometimes by those we would amuse—'Is it true?'

If there were room here for a discussion as to what is 'truth' in such cases, I might, to such a question touching this our evening volume, answer Yes! to my own satisfaction at least; for I have a private conviction that a certain kind of truth lies at the bottom of all the pieces that compose it. They have been written in various moods; some gay, some grave; some hopeful, some a little desponding, as the characters or events of the hour tinged the thoughts with rose-color, sober grey, dreaded blue, and—perhaps the reader will think—an occasional shade of green. But every writer has before him an imaginary audience, and mine is usually composed of young people, so I will hope the sombre tints will not be found to prevail. One hates to be set down as a mere moralizer—a tiresome companion anywhere. A generally serious aim I am content to avow, and I confess also an ambition to make a peculiarly American book; not that I think

American views of manners and morals should be partial or narrow, but because the foreign literature which furnishes most of the reading of our young people seems to me likely to inspire them with un-American ideas of society and even of duty, and it becomes, therefore, especially desirable to refer sometimes to the ancient and universal standards—those whose excellence is beyond dispute, though portions of the world have departed far from their influence, led away by the incorrect notions of life which prevail in old and corrupt communities.

If I could have the least influence in recommending simplicity, truthfulness, and *humanity* of manners, I should feel proud indeed. By 'humanity' in manners, I would be understood to mean manners founded on the great law of love, and not on mere convention—springing from a principle, and not poorly imitative of those whom we are humble enough to look upon as above us. Fine manners are those which show full and due consideration for every one's merits and feelings—quite another affair from fashionable manners, which are respective only of worldly advantages. That these are but poor reasons for a show of kindness, we must all have felt. As we frequently discern beneath the assumptions of refinement, evidences of revolting coarseness, so we often find under the roughest exterior, tokens of a delicacy which needs but favoring circumstances to make it charming; and if we are shocked at the exhibition of mean qualities in the uncultivated, it is well to learn to feel that they are even more disgusting in those who have had greater

advantages. We may be amused at the crude notions entertained by the rough backwoodsman on the subject of education, but we ought to contemplate with serious regret the condition of those who, content with the merest froth of learning and accomplishments, fancy themselves much higher in the intellectual scale than their brethren of the forest.

It is evident that to meet worthily all varieties of human character and claims, as consistent American citizens are bound to do, we need some standard that knows no fluctuation, no caprice; that owes no moulding to the pride or whims of people living under different circumstances, and acknowledges subjection only to principles that govern the universal human heart. If I have succeeded at all in expressing my convictions on this subject, a reference to it will be found more or less prominent in all the sketches and essays that follow.

# THE EVENING BOOK.

## THE HOUSEHOLD.

What an old-fashioned word! Yes—and it means an old-fashioned thing too. A "post-coach" of twenty years ago in comparison with a rail-car of the present day, is as the "household" of our great-grandfathers to the "*menage*" of our time. The keep of a feudal castle would look rather out of place among the conservatories, artificial waterworks, and Chinese bridges of a modern garden; perhaps the household, or citadel of home, has as little claim to a position of honor among the "refinements" of fashionable society. What need of walls or intrenchments when we live for the public? Privacy is but another word for ennui; retirement has but one meaning or value—that of affording opportunity of preparation for display. If we would shut out the world, it is only when nature imperiously demands a moment's respite from its glare. Happy they whose nerves, like iron, grow the tougher by hammering! They need lose no time.

Yet there was something pleasant in the antiquated idea of the home citadel. The old-fashioned parlor—what a nice place it was! It had no twin, and could have none, for its best ornaments were

such as no skill of upholstery could match. Where could we get another grandmamma for the warm corner? Dear old lady, with her well-starched laces, her spotless white satin cap-riband, her shining black silk gown and shawl, her knitting, and her foot-stove—who can replace her? And in the corner next the window, where the light can fall on her left hand, so that the flitting shadow of the ever busy right may not confuse the stitches, there is mamma, with her capacious work-basket before her; a whole array of, not spools, but cotton-balls or thread-papers; pin-cushions, emery-bags, thimbles, needle-books, on the table at her side; not to mention the piece of wax gashed and criss-crossed in every direction by whistling threads, the very emblem of seamstress-thrift in the good days of old. A clear light comes in at the window, for rooms where sewing is to be done must not be dimmed, let the carpets fade as they will; no becoming twilight, therefore, can be among the attractions of our household parlor. When papa sits down to his paper, he must have sunshine, or the next best thing that is to be had; his eyes will not serve him for light made gray or milky by struggling through thick linen, and he has never been used to sitting in the basement to "save the parlors." What a cheerful rendezvous this makes for the children when they come from school; no seeking mamma in bed-rooms, nurseries, or odd, out-of-the-way nooks and corners, to which it would require a terrier's instinct to trace her with any precision. A radiating centre of light and love is easily found, and young hearts thrill with a pleasure all the sweeter for being undefined, as they approach it. Affection melts and flows around in this genial atmosphere, till it fills the whole mould, giving out smiles and kisses as it goes.

Such a parlor as we are describing—large, square, light, cheerful and intensely human in its aspect; admits no furniture too rich or too fragile for daily use. Any brown-hollanding of chairs and sofas,

or gauzing of lamps and candelabra would be out of character. A drugget is admissible, for a great deal of eating is done in this room, and little feet might tread bread-and-butter and potato into the carpet unhandsomely. A sideboard is essential, for it gives a hint of hospitality; and a plate-warmer may stand near it without a blush. A nest of salvers graces a recess—old social friends now banished to the china-closet. The mantelpiece shows lamps and candlesticks; a three-minute glass for boiling eggs by; a small marble bust of Washington for a centre-piece, and china flower-pots at the ends; besides a pair of card-racks, in which are displayed a dozen or so of cards somewhat yellowed by time and good fires. A picture hangs above; perhaps a colored engraving from Morland, in which cows, pigs, and chickens remind the young folk of that delightful summer when they were in the country, romping in haymows, and chasing Uncle John's old horse round the field, hoping to inveigle his senile sagacity to the bridle cunningly hidden behind Charlie's back. Crimson curtains there are, but not too close, and a few geraniums and monthly roses stand just where they can catch the morning sun, which shines through their leaves, producing another summer illusion. The tables have newspapers, pamphlets, and books on them; for conversation is a chief amusement of the true household parlor, and all the topics of the day are in place, from the congressional debates to the new novel, or the theatrical prodigy. The pianoforte is conspicuous at one side of the room, and plenty of music lies about it; and a flute is there—for fluting is almost a domestic duty.

But we need not further particularize, for the main point in a household parlor is the air of life, freedom, affection, and intelligence; the unmistakeable signs of a common interest; the nestling and home-like look of mother's corner, and the severer dignity of

grand-mamma's; the all-day tone, as if a pleasant call was always acceptable, and was accounted among the proper belongings of the social area. There may be shreds on the carpet and a litter of play-things under the table, but no cold look will remind the visitor that the proper hour has not been hit. Mamma may be washing up the breakfast things, but she will not run away, or even hide her towel, if one of papa's good friends stops in on his way down town. She will, more probably, defer a little her daily visit to the kitchen, rather than lose the talk of the grave men about politics or business.

Wherein consists the difference between such a parlor as we have sketched, and the morning room of fashionable houses? Our little picture doubtless seems a mere vagary of the imagination, like impossible Swiss scenery; our young readers can hardly believe such things ever were, and they are far from desiring that they should come back again; so different is the whole course and current of their ideas of domestic life. In what consists the difference? Is it in particulars only, or in the spirit of the household?

There is hardly a town in all this glorious and blessed Union of ours, where we do not, or may not hear lamentations over the old times of sociability, and free, neighborly intercourse. In some places it is 'Before our society became so large,' in others, 'Before we had a few rich people among us, who set expensive fashions, and encouraged ceremony and show.' In the cities it may perhaps be, 'It is in vain to attempt social visiting here. The gentlemen are so late at their business, and come home so tired, that they want nothing but rest;' or 'The ladies have become so fashionable that nothing but a morning call is permissible without special invitation.' So we are to suppose there is but little beside formal or showy visiting. And does this bespeak greater privacy and comfort at home?

All experience says no! Social feeling is an element of home; pride is the enemy of both. A home pervaded by the true spirit is gladdened by the voice of a friend. A home in which the education of children is a sacred object, covets the conversation of intelligent and various guests. A home of whose harmony religion is the diapason, breathes a spirit of hospitality. In none of these will the alternation be between seclusion and display—two extremes equally inimical to joyous domesticity. Common life will be allowed to flow through them, for the sake of its healthy current, its fertilizing clouds and dews, and the rainbow gleams that flit across its surface, wherein the eternal stars are mirrored. Life! how mad to shut it out for pride's sake!

But we must yield to circumstances! Ah indeed! were circumstances made for man, or man for circumstances? What compelling power binds us in the traces of fashion? Whose folly is it that makes us ashamed of domestic employments, in such sort that we sedulously banish every symptom of them from the seen part of our life? Who is it that measures out the forms with which a neighbor must be received, or the degree of dress necessary to make an unexpected visit agreeable? It is in vain to talk of 'Society,' as if society were a huge, irresistible Morgante, using us as tools or servants, or a tremendous cylinder flatting us out, in spite of ourselves, like mere dough. We, and such as we, make society, and it is our individual cowardice, or mean ambition, that keeps it from improving. Every virtuous family has the seeds of rational and happy society within itself. There is the community of interest, and the consciousness of this community, which is the first requisite for justice and harmony. There is the instinctive and habitual affection, which is the only omnipotent antidote against those paroxysms of selfishness or ill humor to which we are all liable, and must be

so while we are in a condition in which mind and body contend for mastery with alternate success. There are the various tastes of age and youth, sex, genius, and idiosyncrasy, which are necessary to an exciting and profitable variety of interest. There is the felt necessity for a common and inflexible standard of duty, to which all may refer without fear of contradiction. There are the antagonist circumstances of joy and sorrow, misfortune and success, transgression and repentance, authority, restraint, and struggling will, demanding that sympathy without which we should all become intolerable and hard-hearted egotists, in the course of our threescore and ten years' intercourse with the world at large. In short, home is indeed a little world; and in each household we see in some sense a resemblance to the society of which it forms a part. If love and truth, justice and religion, reigned within our homes, so would they in social life; if pride, desire of display, and of appearing what we are not; if a longing for excitement, a secret indulgence of vicious inclinations, and the selfish forgetfulness of the oneness of family interests characterize our household life, so will they form the staple of that 'Society' which we are fond of making a scape-goat of. The decay of the household fire is the cause of our social coldness; if we would have our outer intercourse rational, unaffected, sympathetic, improving, and beneficent, we must reform our domestic maxims.

One theme of conservative satire against our newfangled republic,—satire hissed abroad, and cautiously echoed at home,—is the want of reverence and subordination observable in our young people, as if it were, as indeed we have heard it gravely asserted to be, a natural consequence of our institutions. But surely this is a misunderstanding of the very nature of liberty, which is to be esteemed only as the handmaid of obedience.

For who loves that, must first be wise and good.

and there is no goodness where there is no reverence. Our own thought, as to this confessed want in the rising generation is, that in the wild chase after wealth and social distinction, the old-fashioned, fundamental, patriarchal, God-given idea of the household is merged into a sort of domestic republic, in which all are free and equal, and the very notion of natural headship is repudiated, the prominent object being not the family but the world; not the ark of shelter, but the struggling waves around it, and the floating, slippery treasures upon them. For these we venture all; for these we are content to dive, to dwell on rafts, or cling to pieces of wreck; to dare the unknown monsters of the deep; to go down with both hands clutched full of the spoils with which we thought to return home at evening. Our thoughts may revert to the light which we know is shining there, but the glare about us makes it seem tame, if not contemptible. But are the young people alone to blame for these false and foolish notions? Alas, no! Have we not taught them that the time spent under the paternal roof is only a time of training for the great arena? Has the happiness of home been an important end with us, or have we let it slip into the class of accidents, not worth considering in comparison with life's great object? The weariness of this grinding, unsatisfactory life of ours makes our children necessary as playthings, so long as they can amuse us; and the moment they pass this age their preparation for grinding on their own account commences, and we hasten to throw them on their individual responsibility. Authority, that soul and sun of the household, is unknown. We try a little government or control of actions; but we make but slender effort towards producing the state of mind which makes it natural to obey. Our children are therefore satisfied if they fulfill a certain specified round of duty or

observance towards us. Filial piety is really and truly an obsolete expression in the nineteenth century; it smacks of feudality, even. It is the tendency of an analytic and utilitarian age to strip common life of its poetry, and the household suffers with the rest. We live for the future—whether in a wise sense or not is the question. To live truly for the future we must live in the present. "The life that now is" is the key of the future. Certainly at some period of our existence we must undergo a moral and spiritual probation with express reference to our ultimate moral and spiritual state. Nature seems to have appointed the domestic circle, in all its closeness of relation, openness of vision, and emotional incident, as the infant school for eternity. Later we are transferred to a more advanced or enlarged seminary on the same plan, where, in due time, we take the place of teachers, though we are still learners, too, repeating on a larger scale the lessons of the household. What a beneficent arrangement, if we would but enter into it heartily! What training in love, in patience, in fellow-feeling, in pity, in self-control, and self-denial! What strength in union, what comfort in mutual reliance, and the unwavering confidence of sympathy!

The unsophisticated imagination delights in the notion of the household, its seclusion which is not solitude—its exclusion which is not inhospitality—its unity which implies variety. Children know this, as, when two of them will sit down under a great basket, and look round with a feeling of delicious snugness, saying, "This is our house;" or with even less to aid the fancy, set a circle of chairs to personate a home, supplying the enclosing walls out of "the stuff that dreams are made of," and pretending to go through the daily routine of significant nothings which to their minds constitute home. The little girl takes small pleasure with her dolls till she can establish them in something that seems like a domestic state, and have

dressing and undressing, going to bed and getting up, sitting on sofas, entertaining company, and handing tea. We have seen children in the country that would make a drawing-room out of an old decayed stump, hanging the little hollows with mosses for curtains; placing bits of broken china for ornaments and table furniture; and pretty little piles of red leaves or flowers for fires, with thimbles ingeniously hung on threads, suspended over the mock blaze with mock dinners in them. The talk that accompanied all this was household talk:—

> Human nature's daily food—
> Transient sorrows, simple wiles,
> Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles;

a very reflex of the home scenes. It is for this that a family of dolls should always be allowed an important place in the nursery; not wax dolls that must be laid away, and only taken out to have their eyes pulled open and shut by means of a string, like nothing on earth or under the earth; but good, serviceable babies, that can be dressed and undressed, have their faces washed occasionally, and even be whipped, when the little mamma is in the mood for domestic discipline. The fashion of sending children to school at a very early age shortens the doll period too much for our ideas; we would prolong it almost indefinitely, for the sake of the home element. Girls cannot have the details of domestic life too firmly fixed in their minds. We cannot help feeling a pity, not wholly untinged with contempt, when we hear young ladies publishing their total ignorance of household minutiæ. They seem to us shorn of one of the modest glories of womanhood. If we were entrusted with the making up of a bride's *trousseau*, we should be sure to put in a couple of real (not make-believe) aprons, for making cake and custards in, even if there were a point-lace veil. To us there is no incon-

gruity in these things. There is no domestic office, however trivial or toilsome, that is not capable of being exalted to some degree of dignity by the sentiment or spirit in which it is performed, as there is none which may not be degraded by sordid thoughts. Thus, 'ordering a supper,' says Lady M. W. Montague, and we would add, under certain imaginable circumstances, cooking one, 'is not merely ordering a supper, but preparing for the refreshment and pleasure of those we love;' while the rites of hospitality in their most graceful and imposing form are every day profaned by the mean, ostentatious, or trafficking spirit which prompts them.

We touched on authority as the basis of household happiness—a proof how antiquated are our notions. But if the very mention of authority, even in connection with the training of children, give an air of mustiness to our page, how shall we face the reader of to-day, when we avow that we judge no family to be truly and rationally happy, unless the head of it possess absolute authority, in such sense that his known wish is law—his expressed will imperative. Is this an anti-democratic sentiment? By no means. The ideal family supposes a head who is himself under law, and that of the most stringent and inevitable kind. It supposes him to hold and exercise authority under a deep sense of duty, as being something with which God clothed him when he made him husband and father, and which he is, therefore, on no occasion or account, at liberty to put off or set aside as a thing indifferent. This power is necessary to the full development and exercise of that beautiful virtue of obedience, without which the human will must struggle on hopelessly for ever, being forbidden by its very constitution to know happiness on any other terms. It is an ill sign of the times, that the old-fashioned promise of obedience in the marriage ceremony is now only a theme for small wit. Those wise fathers who placed it

there knew the human heart better than we suppose. They knew that, as surely as man and wife are one, so surely do they thus united become a Cerberus-like monster, if they retain more than one head. The old song says,

> 'One of us two must obey—
> Is it man or woman? say!'

A house in which this question remains undecided, is always a pitiable spectacle, for both nature and religion are set aside there.

We had not dared to touch on this incendiary topic if we had not been sure of such support as admits not of gainsaying. Shakspeare's shrewdness, his knowledge of the human heart, his high ideal of woman as wife and mother, not to speak of his poetic appreciation of the beauty of fitness, render his opinion peculiarly valuable on this ticklish point. Hear him:—

> 'Thy husband is thy life, thy lord, thy keeper,
> Thy HEAD, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,
> And for thy maintenance: commits his body
> To painful labor both by sea and land,
> To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,
> While thou liest warm at home, secure and safe:
> And craves no other tribute at thy hands
> Than love, fair looks, and true obedience—
> Too little payment for so great a debt!'

If now we should in turn read a homily to this supreme head (which is bound to have ears), we might perhaps forfeit all the gratitude we suppose ourselves to have earned from him. We should show him such a list of the duties which true headship imposes, that he would be glad to be diminished, and perhaps change places with the least important of his subjects. The possession of unquestionable authority almost makes him responsible for

the happiness of the household. No sunshine is so cheering as the countenance of a father who is feared as well as loved. A brow clouded with care, a mind too much absorbed by schemes of gain or ambition to be able to unbend itself in the domestic circle, a temper which vacillates between impatience under annoyance, and the decision which puts an end to it, a disposition to indulgence which has no better foundation than mere indolence, and which is, therefore, sure to be unequal—these are all forbidden to him whose right it is to rule. In short, unless he rule himself, he is obviously unfit to rule anybody else; so that, to assume this high position under law and gospel, is to enter into bonds to be good! which appears to us a fair offset against the duty of obedience on the other side.

One reason, certainly, why there is less household feeling than formerly, is that young married people, at present, think it necessary to begin life where their fathers left off—with a complete establishment, and not a loop-hole left for those little plans of future addition to domestic comforts or luxuries which give such a pleasant stimulus to economy, and confer so tender a value on the things purchased by means of an especial self-denial in another quarter. Charles Lamb, who was an adept in these gentle philosophies, said that after he had the ability to buy a choice book when he chose, the indulgence had, somehow, lost its sweetness, and brought nothing of the relish that used to attend a purchase after he and Mary had been looking and longing, and at last only dared buy upon the strength of days' or weeks' economizing. This is a secret worth learning by those who would get the full flavor of life, and make home the centre of a thousand delightful interests and memories.

But all this is supposing that to please ourselves, and not the world, is the object. The world begs leave to order matters more rationally for us. Scorning nature's plan of pushing the fledgling

from the parental nest before his wings are full grown, in order that he may strengthen and enjoy them the better through the necessity of effort. It demands at least the appearance of independent maturity, and scouts any idea of growth in the great matter of feathers. And, what is worse, this regulation plumage often leaves the wearers chilled and uncomfortable, though perhaps unconscious why. We might learn better notions as to our *début* from the sportsman, for he knows that the pleasure is in the chase, not the dinner.

In thus attempting faintly to shadow forth the difference between house and home, we have unavoidably broached some unpopular subjects, and must expect to be reckoned behind the age. But we pray our readers to remember that, in preferring the household warmth and sacredness of simple times to the less carefully impropriated splendors of this, we are but following—so far as the question is an æsthetic one, at least—the example of the artist, who chooses for his canvas rather the sun-stained Italian damsel, with her trim, yet fantastic bodice, square head-dress of coarse linen, and quaint distaff and spindle, than the most faultlessly furbelowed modern belle, though her complexion be like blanc-mange, and her form like an hour-glass. These are matters of taste, and, perhaps, if we cannot quite agree, we may agree to differ.

# A CHAPTER ON HOSPITALITY.

Few of the good and pleasant things of this world will bear analyzing. We must take them as they are, or we lose them altogether. Even our own most fondly-cherished benevolences—the things whereby in our secret souls, we hope to cover at least a part of the multitude of sins—change color when we apply the severe tests with which we are wont to try the good deeds of our neighbors. It is not well to sift everything for the sake of detecting earthiness; yet the world is so full of adulterations that something is necessary in self-defence. We may inquire a little into some fair-seeming shows, at least to draw lessons for our own practice.

No quality or habit is more popular, or more naturally popular, than hospitality. It appeals so directly to the universal part of us—the poor wants of poor human nature, in the first place, and that other want no less urgent, that what contribntes to the refreshment of the body should be seasoned with love or kindness, or some show of them. We love even the pretence so dearly that we praise an inn—that abode of the mercenary demons—in proportion as there is the outward semblance of this, though we know it will all be 'put down in the bill.' This may be one reason why some persons who have sacrificed life's best blessing—spontaneous, disinterested

affection—to the indulgence of certain anti-social uncongenialities, find their only pleasure in advancing age, in places where the appearance, at least, of 'honor, love, obedience, troops of friends,' may be purchased with money—the only means left these unfortunates.

Being popular, hospitality is, of course, a virtue which most people wish to practise in some shape, and which many people try to practise at the smallest possible expense. We do not mean expense of money—though this is sometimes spared rather unnecessarily—but of some other things not so cheap as money. Sad blunders are made—blunders of various kinds; some which cover us with shame upon reflection; some which cover us with ridicule while we are happily unconscious; some which make enemies where we hoped to have secured friends; some through means of which our pride appears, while we flatter ourselves that we are conferring a highly appreciated honor upon our guests. In primitive conditions of life, where the daily wants become especially prominent, from the degree of uncertainty which exists as to whether they will be satisfied and how,—hospitality is often impulsive and sincere. Sympathy is necessarily strong in such cases. It is in highly civilized and artificial life that hospitality becomes an art, to be studied like other fine arts, or neglected and contemned through pride and inveterate self-indulgence. Poole—Paul Pry Poole—has an amusing sketch, 'A Christmas Visit to Dribble Hall,' an extract from which, in the 'Living Age,' gave rlse to this homily, by calling up to remembrance certain amusing passages in our own experience, which set us upon theorizing a little in the matter. 'Squire Dribble' is a person who chooses to invite people to his house, and when they are there and fairly in his power, takes particular care to avoid perceiving their wants, and especially cannot be made to understand that

their habits *may* not be precisely similar to his own. Two gentlemen arrive at his country-house too late for dinner; he regrets that they did not come sooner, but promises to hurry *supper* by *half an hour*. On their hinting pretty broadly that so considerable a delay will be inconvenient after a long drive, he offers a slice of 'something cold' with tea. In the morning he insists upon their rising at his hour, and allows them to dress in the bitter cold without fire, and so come down blue and shivering to the breakfast-table, where the eggs are counted out and the newspaper clutched by the squire, who declares he would not give a farthing for the paper unless he sees the first of it.

This is no fancy sketch—we are convinced of it. We have seen American Dribbles who occasionally tried to be hospitable just in the squire's manner. In houses where all below stairs was costly and luxurious, we have seen the guest-chamber unfurnished even with the requisite amount of chairs and tables; no attendance of a servant offered, and no notice given of the time for rising, until the bell rang for the early breakfast which was then on the table. We have seen a lady who had visits and shopping on her hands, suffered to sit still, when her time was very limited, because the walking was too bad for her to venture out on foot, and delicacy prevented her sending for a carriage while there was one quite at liberty, though not offered. In this matter of carriages particularly, a 'Dribble' hospitality is but too common; for again and again have we seen young ladies who were visiting where a coach was kept, obliged to walk home after evening parties—attended by a servant or by some woful beau—a mile or two in the cold, because, although no carriage was sent, it was well understood that the family pride forbade any inmate from using a hired one.

To be 'treated like one of the family' is sometimes very agree-

able, but this may be carried too far. We once knew a lady so candid as to protest against this mark of affection. She declared that when she visited, it made part of her pleasure to be treated like company. Guests differ so much on this point that one must have unusual tact if, in entertaining much, an occasional error be not committed. Some are so painfully anxious to avoid giving trouble that an additional dish makes them miserable, quite forgetting that with many a good, kind-hearted entertainer, this very trouble is a pleasure. Some again find their own habits so imperious that they play 'Dribble' in other people's houses, putting everybody out as to time, place and circumstance, without a misgiving. A noted lady traveling in this country some years ago, required her bottle of Champagne every night on going to bed, and that in the soberest of eastern families. This, too, was only an item in the list of her rather onerous inamissibles. We have heard more than one anecdote of popular clergymen, who, during occasional visits to their greatest admirers, have construed the guest-right so rigorously as to cause the entire household to heave a simultaneous sigh of relief at their departure.

Conscientious people, whose habits are very strict, and who sincerely believe certain practices and certain articles of diet to be highly deleterious, are sometimes cruelly divided between the desire to make their guests' time pass agreeably and to entertain them with the best the house affords, and the fear of contributing to evil habits or offering what is injurious to health. Since the temperance reformation, many persons have learned to think every form of spirituous liquors so injurious that they dare not set anything of the kind before their friends; while, on the other hand, the old ideas of generous conviviality and hearty welcome attached to this form of refreshment are so potent, that they feel a species of regret—perhaps, also,

of false shame—which makes an adherence to principle in this particular extremely difficult. Others, on the contrary, after all that has been said and written on the subject, seem still to fancy that they show their hospitality by pressing the guest to drink whether he will or not; and even in a case where it was well known that the person so pressed had been saved on the brink of ruin only by the resolution not to touch even a single glass, we have seen a lady tempt and urge the unfortunate visitor, until she looked to us like some fell Mœnad luring a hapless mortal to destruction.

Even in the matter of tea and coffee, some people have a conscience, and offer with reluctance to their friends what seems to them premature old age, depression of spirits, paralysis and early death. Others again are so over-kind that they must make your coffee strong enough to be sour and your tea to be bitter, reminding one of the story of the good old Jersey lady who entertained General Washington during the time of the war, when *molasses* was the usual sweetener.

'Not quite so sweet, ma'am, if you please,' said the courteous great man, when he handed his tea-cup to be filled a second time.

'Oh, dear!' said the hospitable dame, putting in rather an *extra* share of the precious article, 'if it was *all* molasses it wouldn't be too good for General Washington!'

Pinching hospitality is bad enough, but ostentatious hospitality, if possible, worse. To see in all your host's pompous offers, in all his sedulous attentions and all his unwearied display of resources, himself and not you the real object; to feel that, while you are *géné* with his oppressive civilities, he considers himself laying you under the greatest obligations; to find ceremonious observance taking the place of welcome, and formality rendering ease impossible—this is but too common in this country as well as elsewhere among those

who lack nothing of this world's goods but the knowledge how to enjoy. A visit under such circumstances is so odious that a guest would need to be presented with a good part of the fine things he sees—according to the practice of the worthy host in the Persian Tales—to induce him to make a second attempt.

Sincerity is sometimes severely tried in cases where hospitality appears to demand one course, while truth and nature cry out for its opposite. To seem glad to see a visitor when, from whatever circumstance, you wish he had chosen to stop anywhere else; to be obliged to press him to stay when your affairs imperatively require that you should be left alone; to feel constrained to be 'in spirits' with a heavy heart; to wear a hilarious aspect when mirth is 'as vinegar to the teeth and as smoke to the eyes;' that we should ever do or even attempt such things, shows how deeply we feel the claims of hospitality. They are done or attempted every day, not through self-interest or any such unworthy motive, but simply from the instinctive dread of seeming deficient in what mankind in all ages have agreed to consider a sacred duty. Those who, through moroseness, pride, or parsimony, decline these and kindred sacrifices, are universally denounced as selfish churls or haughty egotists, and voted inhuman by the general voice.

Like many other virtues, hospitality is practised in its perfection by the poor. If the rich *did their share*, how would the woes of this world be lightened! how would the diffusive blessing irradiate a wider and a wider circle, until the vast confines of society would bask in the reviving ray! If every forlorn widow whose heart bleeds over the recollection of past happiness made bitter by contrast with present poverty and sorrow, found a comfortable home in the ample establishment of her rich kinsman; if every young man struggling for a foothold on the slippery soil of life, were cheered and aided by

the countenance of some neighbor whom fortune had endowed with the power to confer happiness; if the lovely girls, shrinking and delicate, whom we see every day toiling timidly for a mere pittance to sustain frail life and guard the sacred remnant of gentility, were taken by the hand, invited and encouraged, by ladies who pass them by with a cold nod—but where shall we stop in enumerating the cases in which true, genial hospitality, practised by the rich ungrudgingly, without a selfish drawback—in short, practised as the poor practise it—would prove a fountain of blessedness, almost an antidote to half the keener miseries under which society groans!

Yes: the poor—and children—understand hospitality after the pure model of Christ and his apostles. We can cite two instances, both *true.*

In the western woods, a few years since, lived a very indigent Irish family. Their log-cabin scarcely protected them from the weather, and the potato field made but poor provision for the numerous rosy cheeks that shone through the unstopped chinks when a stranger was passing by. Yet when another Irish family, poorer still, and way-worn and travel-soiled, stopped at their door—children, household goods and all—they not only received and entertained them for the night, but kept them many days, sharing with this family, as numerous as their own, the *one* room and loft which made up their poor dwelling, and treating them in all respects as if they had been invited guests. And the mother of the same family, on hearing of the death of a widowed sister who had lived in New York, immediately set on foot an inquiry as to the residence of the children, with a view to coming all the way to the city to take the orphans home to her own house and bring them up with her own children. We never heard whether the search was successful, for the circumstance occurred about the time we were leaving that part

of the country; but that the intention was sincere, and would be carried into effect if possible, there was no shadow of doubt.

As to children and their sincere, generous little hearts, we were going to say, that one asked his mother, in all seriousness, 'Mamma, why don't you ask the *poor people* when you have a party? Doesn't it say so in the Bible?' A keen reproof, and unanswerable.

The nearest we recollect to have observed to this literal construction of the sacred injunction, among those who may be called the rich—in contradistinction to those whom we usually call the poor, though our kind friends were far from being what the world considers rich—was in the case of a city family, who lived well, and who always on Christmas day, Thanksgiving, or other festival time, when a dinner more generous than ordinary smoked upon the board, took care to invite their homeless friends who lived somewhat poorly or uncomfortably—the widow from her low-priced boarding house; the young clerk, perhaps, far from his father's comfortable fireside; the daily teacher, whose only deficiency lay in the purse—these were the guests cheered at this truly hospitable board; and cheered heartily—not with cold, half-reluctant civility, but with the warmest welcome, and the pleasant appendix of the long, merry evening with music and games, and the frolic dance after the piano. We would not be understood to give this as a solitary instance, but we wish we knew of many such.

The forms of society are in a high degree inimical to true hospitality. Pride has crushed genuine social feeling out of too many hearts, and the consequence is a cold sterility of intercourse, a soul-stifling ceremoniousness, a sleepless vigilance for self, totally incompatible with that free, flowing, genial intercourse with humanity, so nourishing to all the better feelings. The sacred love of home—that panacea for many of life's ills—suffers with the rest. Few

people have homes now a days. The fine, cheerful, every-day parlor, with its table covered with the implements of real occupation and real amusement; mamma on the sofa, with her needle; grandmamma in her great chair, knitting; pussy winking at the fire between them, is gone. In its place we have two gorgeous rooms, arranged for company but empty of human life; tables covered with gaudy, ostentatious and useless articles—a very mockery of anything like rational pastime—the light of heaven as cautiously excluded as the delicious music of free, childish voices; every member of the family wandering in forlorn loneliness, or huddled in some 'back room' or 'basement,' in which are collected the only means of comfort left them under this miserable arrangement. This is the substitute which hundreds of people accept in place of home! Shall we look in such places for hospitality? As soon expect figs from thistles. Invitations there will be occasionally, doubtless, for 'society' expects it; but let a country cousin present himself, and see whether he will be put into the state apartments. Let no infirm and indigent relative expect a place under such roof. Let not even the humble individual who placed the stepping-stone which led to that fortune, ask a share in the abundance which would never have had a beginning but for his timely aid. 'We have changed all that!'

But setting aside the hospitality which has any reference to duty or obligation, it is to be feared that the other kind—that which is exercised for the sake of the pleasure it brings—is becoming more and more rare among us. The deadly strife of emulation, the mad pursuit of wealth, the suspicion engendered by rivalry, leave little chance for the spontaneity, the *abandon*, the hearty sympathy which give the charm to social meetings and make the exercise of hospitality one of the highest pleasures. We have attempted to dignify

our simple republicanism by far-away, melancholy imitations of the Old World; but the incongruity between these forms and the true spirit of our institutions is such, that all we gain is a bald emptiness, gilded over with vulgar show. Real dignity, such as that of John Adams when he lived among his country neighbors as if he had never seen a court, we are learning to despise. We persist in making ourselves the laughing-stock of really refined people, by forsaking our true ground and attempting to stand upon that which shows our deficiences to the greatest disadvantage. When shall we learn that the 'spare feast—a radish and an egg,' if partaken by the good and the cultivated, has a charm which no expense can purchase? When shall we look at the spirit rather than the semblance of things—when give up the shadow for the substance?

# THE MYSTERY OF VISITING.

THERE is something wonderfully primitive and simple in the fundamental idea of visiting. You leave your own place and your chosen employments, your slipshod ease and privileged plainness, and sally forth, in special trim, with your mind emptied, as far as possible, of whatever has been engrossing it, to make a descent upon the domicile of another, under the idea that your presence will give him pleasure, and, remotely, yourself. Can anything denote more amiable simplicity? or, according to a certain favorite vocabulary, can anything be more intensely green? What a confession of the need of human sympathy! What *bonhommie* in the conviction that you will be welcome! What reckless self-committal in the whole affair! Let no one say this is not a good-natured world, since it still keeps up a reverence for the fossil remains of what was once the heart of its oyster.

Not to go back to the creation (some proof of self-denial, in these days of research,) what occasioned the first visit, probably? Was it the birth of a baby, or a wish to borrow somewhat for the simple householdry, or a cause of complaint about some rural trespass; a desire to share superabundant grapes with a neighbor who abounded more in pomegranates; a twilight fancy for gossip about a stray kid, or a wound from 'the blindboy's butt-shaft?' Was the delight of

visiting, like the succulence of roast pig, discovered by chance; or was it, like the talk which is its essence, an instinct? This last we particularly doubt, from present manifestations. Instincts do not wear out; they are as fresh as in the days when visiting began—but where is visiting?

A curious semblance of the old rite now serves us, a mere Duessa —a form of snow, impudently pretending to vitality. We are put off with this congelation—a compound of formality, dissimulation, weariness, and vanity, which it is not easy to subject to any test without resolving it at once into its unwholesome elements. Yet why must it be so? Would it require daring equal to that which dashed into the enchanted wood of Ismeno, or that which exterminated the Mamelukes, to fall back upon first principles, and let inclination have something to do with offering and returning visits?

A coat of mail is, strangely enough, the first requisite when we have a round of calls to make; not the 'silver arms' of fair Clorinda, but the unlovely, oyster-like coat of Pride, the helmet of Indifference, the breastplate of Distrust, the barred visor of Self-esteem, the shield of 'gentle Dulness;' while over all floats the gaudy, tinsel scarf of Fashion. Whatever else be present or lacking, Pride, defensive, if not offensive, must clothe us all over. The eyes must be guarded, lest they mete out too much consideration to those who bear no stamp. The neck must be stiffened, lest it bend beyond the haughty angle of self-reservation in the acknowledgment of civilities. The mouth is bound to keep its portcullis ever ready to fall on a word which implies unaffected pleasure or surprise. Each motion must have its motive; every civility its well-weighed return in prospect. Subjects of conversation must be any but those which naturally present themselves to the mind. If a certain round is not *pre*scribed, we feel that all beyond it is *pro*scribed. Oh! the unut-

terable weariness of this worse than dumbshow! No wonder we groan in spirit when there are visits to be made!

But some fair, innocent face looks up at us, out of a forest home, perhaps, or in a wide, unneighbored prairie, and asks what all this means. 'Is not a visit always a delightful thing—full of good feeling—the cheerer of solitude—the lightener of labor—the healer of differences—the antidote of life's bitterness?' Ah! primitive child! it is so, indeed, to you. The thought of a visit makes your dear little heart beat. If one is offered or expected at your father's, with what cheerful readiness do you lend your aid to the preparations! How your winged feet skim along the floor, or surmount the stairs; your brain full of ingenious devices and substitutes, your slender fingers loaded with plates and glasses, and a tidy apron depending from your taper waist! Thoughts of dress give you but little trouble, for your choice is limited to the pink ribbon and the blue one. What the company will wear is of still less moment, so they only come! It would be hard to make you believe that we invite people and then hope they will *not* come! If you omit anybody, it will be the friend who possesses too many acres, or he who has been sent to the legislature from your district, lest dignity should interfere with pleasure; we, on the contrary, think first of the magnates, even though we know that the gloom of their grandeur will overshadow the mirth of everybody else, and prove a wet blanket to the social fire. You will, perhaps, be surprised to learn that we keep a debtor and creditor account of visits, and talk of owing a call, or owing an invitation, as your father does of owing a hundred dollars at the store, for value received. When we have made a visit and are about departing, we invite a return, in the choicest terms of affectionate, or at least cordial interest; but if our friend is new enough to take us at our word, and pay the debt too soon, we

complain, and say, 'Oh dear! there's another call to make!' Our whole system of morning visiting will amuse you, doubtless; we will just give you a sketch of it.

A hint has already been dropt as to the grudging spirit of the thing, how we give as little as we can, and get all possible credit for it; and this is the way we do it. Having let the accounts against us become as numerous as is prudent, we draw up a list of our creditors, carefully districted as to residences, so as not to make more cross-journeys than are necessary in going the rounds. Then we array ourselves with all suitable splendor (this is a main point, and we often defer a call upon dear friends for weeks, waiting till the arrivals from Paris shall allow us to endue a new bonnet or mantilla), and, getting into a carriage, card-case in hand, give our list, corrected more anxiously than a price-current, into the keeping of the coachman, with directions to drive as fast as dignity will allow, in order that we may do as much execution as possible with the stone thus carefully smoothed. Arrived at the first house (which is always the one farthest off, for economy of time), we stop—the servant inquires for the lady for whom our civility is intended, while we take out a card and hold it prominent on the carriage door, that not a moment may be lost in case a card is needed. 'Not at home?' Ah then, with what pleased alacrity we commit the scrap of pasteboard to John, after having turned down a corner for each lady, if there are several in this kind and propitious house. But if the answer is, 'At home,' all wears a different aspect. The card slips sadly back again into its silver citadel; we sigh, and say 'Oh dear!' if nothing worse—and then, alighting with measured step, enter the drawing-room, all smiles, and with polite words ready on our lips. Ten minutes of the weather—the walking—the opera—family illnesses—*on dits*, and a little spice of scandal, or at least a

shrug and a meaning look or two—and the duty is done. We enter the carriage again—urge the coachman to new speed, and go through the same ceremonies, hopes, regrets, and tittle-tattle, till dinner-time, and then bless our stars that we have been able to make twenty calls—'so many people were out!'

But this is only one side of the question. How is it with us when we receive visits? We enter here upon a deep mystery. Dear simple child of the woods and fields, did you ever hear of *reception-days?* If not, let us enlighten you a little.

The original idea of a reception-day is a charmingly social and friendly one. It is that the many engagements of city life, and the distances which must be traversed in order to visit several friends in one day, make it peculiarly desirable to know when we are sure to find each at home. It may seem strange that this idea should have occurred to people who are confessedly glad of the opportunity to leave a card, because it allows them time to despatch a greater number of visits at one round; but so it is. The very enormity of our practice sometimes leads to spasmodic efforts at reform. Appointing a reception-day is, therefore, or, rather, we should say, *was* intended to make morning-calls something besides a mere form. To say you will always be at home on such a day, is to insure to your friends the pleasure of seeing you; and what a charming conversational circle might thus be gathered, without ceremony or restraint! No wonder the fashion took at once. But what has fashion made of this plan, so simple, so rational, so in accordance with the best uses of visiting? Something as vapid and senseless as a court-drawing-room, or the eternal bowings and compliments of the Chinese! You, artless blossom of the prairies, or belle of some rural city a thousand miles inland, should thank us for putting you on your guard against Utopian constructions of our social canons.

When you come to town with your good father, and find that the lady of one of his city correspondents sets apart one morning of every week for the reception of her friends, do not imagine her to be necessarily a 'good soul,' who hates to disappoint those who call on her, and therefore simply omits going out on that day lest she should miss them. You will find her enshrined in all that is grand and costly; her door guarded by servants, whose formal ushering will kill within you all hope of unaffected and kindly intercourse; her parlors glittering with all she can possibly accumulate that is *recherché* (that is a favorite word of hers), and her own person arrayed with all the solicitude of splendor that morning dress allows, and sometimes something more. She will receive you with practised grace, and beg you to be seated, perhaps seat herself by you and inquire after your health. Then a tall grave servant will hand you, on a silver salver, a cup of chocolate, or some other permissible refreshment, while your hostess glides over the carpet to show to a new guest or group the identical civilities of which you have just had the benefit. A lady sits at your right hand, as silent as yourself; but you must neither hope for an introduction, nor dare to address her without one, since both these things are forbidden by our code. Another sits at your left, looking wistfully at the fire, or at the stand of greenhouse plants, or, still more likely, at the splendid French clock, but not speaking a word; for she, too, has not the happiness of knowing anybody who chances to sit near her.

Presently she rises; the hostess hastens towards her, presses her hand with great affection, and begs to see her often. She falls into the custody of the footman at the parlor door, is by him committed to his *double* at the hall door, and then trips lightly down the steps to her carriage, to enact the same farce at the next house where there may be a reception on the same day. You look at the clock

too—rise—are smiled upon, and begged to come again; and passing through the same tunnel of footmen, reach the door and the street, with time and opportunity to muse on the mystery of visiting.

Now you are not to go away with the idea that those who reduce visiting to this frigid system, are, of necesssity, heartless people. That would be very unjust. They are often people of very good hearts indeed; but they have somehow allowed their notions of social intercourse to become sophisticated, so that visiting has ceased with them to be even a symbol of friendly feeling, and they look upon it as merely a mode of exhibiting wealth, style, and desirable acquaintances; an assertion, as it were, of social position. Then they will tell you of the great "waste of time" incurred by the old system of receiving morning calls, and how much better it is to give up one day to it than every day; though, by the way, they never did scruple to be 'engaged' or 'out' when visits were not desirable. Another thing is—but this, perhaps, they will not tell you,—that the present is an excellent way of refining one's circle; for as the footman has strict orders not to admit any one, or even receive a card, on other than the regular days, all those who are enough behind the age not to be aware of this, are gradually dropt, their visits passing for nothing, and remaining unreturned. So fades away the momentary dream of sociability with which some simple-hearted people pleased themselves when they first heard of reception-days.

But morning calls are not the only form of our social intercourse. We do not forget the claims of 'peaceful evening.' You have read Cowper, my dear young friend?

> 'Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
> Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,

> And while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
> Throws up a steaming column, and the cups
> That cheer, but not inebriate,' etc., etc.

And you have been at tea-parties too, where, besides the excellent tea and coffee and cake, and warm biscuits and sliced tongue, there was wealth of good-humored chat, and if not wit, plenty of laughter, as the hours wore on towards ten o'clock, when cloaks and hoods were brought, and the gentlemen asked to be allowed to see the ladies home; and, after a brisk walk, everybody was in bed at eleven o'clock, and felt not the worse but the better next morning. Well! we have evening parties, too! A little different, however.

The simple people among whom you have been living really enjoyed these parties. Those who gave them, and those who went to them, had social pleasure as their object. The little bustle, or, perhaps, labor of preparation was just enough to mark the occasion pleasantly. People came together in good humor with themselves and with each other. There may have been some little scandal talked over the tea when it was too strong—but, on the whole, there was a friendly result, and everybody concerned would have felt it a loss to be deprived of such meetings. The very borrowings of certain articles of which no ordinary, moderate household is expected to have enough for extraordinary occasions, promoted good neighborhood and sociability, and the deficiencies sometimes observable, were in some sense an antidote to pride.

Now all this sounds like a sentimental Utopian, if not shabby romance to us, so far have we departed from such primitiveness. To begin, we all say we hate parties. When we go to them we groan and declare them stupid, and when we give them we say still worse things. When we are about to give, there is a close calculation either as to the cheapest way, or as to the most *recherché* without

regard to expense. Of course these two views apply to different extent of means, and the former is the more frequent. Where money is no object, the anxiety is to do something that nobody else can do; whether in splendor of decorations or costliness of supper. If Mrs. A. had a thousand dollars worth of flowers in her rooms, Mrs. B. will strain every nerve to have twice or three times as many, though all the green-houses within ten miles of the city must be stripped to obtain them. If Mrs. C. bought all the game in market for her supper, Mrs. D.'s anxiety is to send to the prairies for hers,—and so in other matters. Mrs. E. had the *prima donna* to sing at her soirée, and Mrs. F. at once engages the whole opera troupe. This is the principle, and its manifestations are infinite. But, perhaps, these freaks are characteristic of circles into which wondering eyes like yours are never likely to penetrate, so we will say something of the other class of party-givers, those who feel themselves under a sort of necessity to invite a great many people for whom they care nothing, merely because these people have before invited them. Obligations of this sort are of so exceedingly complicated a character, that none but a metaphysician could be expected fully to unravel them. The idea of paying one invitation by another is the main one, and whether the invited choose to come or not, is very little to the purpose. The invitation discharges the debt, and places the party giver in the position of a creditor, necessitating of course, another party, and so on, in endless series. It is to be observed in passing, that both debtor and creditor in this shifting-scale believe themselves 'discharging a duty they owe society.' This is another opportunity of getting rid of undesirable acquaintances, since to leave one to whom we 'owe' an invitation out of a general party is equivalent to a final dismissal. This being the case, it is, of course, highly necessary to see that everbody is asked,

and only those omitted whom it is desirable to ignore, and for this purpose, every lady must keep a 'visiting list.' It is on these occasions that we take care to invite our country friends, especially if we have stayed a few weeks at their houses during the preceding summer.

The next question is as to the entertainment; and this would be a still more anxious affair than it is, if its form and extent were not in good measure prescribed by fashion. There are certainly must-haves and may-haves, here as elsewhere; but the liberty of choice is not very extensive. If you do not provide the must-haves you are 'mean,' of course; but it is only by adding the may-haves that you can hope to be elegant. The cost may seem formidable, perhaps; but it has been made matter of accurate computation, that one large party, even though it be a handsome one, costs less in the end than the habit of hospitality for which it is the substitute; so it is not worth while to flinch. We must do our 'duty to society,' and this is the cheapest way.

Do you ask me if there are among us no old-fashioned people, who continue to invite their friends because they love them and wish to see them, offering only such moderate entertainment as may serve to promote social feeling? Yes, indeed? there are even some who will ask you to dine, for the mere pleasure of your company, and with no intention to astonish you or excite your envy! We boast that it was a lady of our city, who declined giving a large party to 'return invitations,' saying she did not wish 'to exhaust in the prodigality of a night, the hospitality of a year.' Ten such could be found among us, we may hope; leaven enough, perhaps, to work out, in time, a change for the better in our social state. Conversation is by no means despised, in some circles, even though it turn on subjects of moral or literary interest; and parlor music,

which aims at no *eclat*, is to be heard sometimes among people who could afford to hire opera singers.

It must be confessed that the wholesale method of 'doing up' our social obligations is a convenient one on some accounts. It prevents jealousy, by placing all alike on a footing of perfect indifference. The apportionment of civilities is a very delicate matter. Really, in some cases, it is walking among eggs to invite only a few of your friends at a time. If you choose them as being acquainted with each other, somebody will be offended at being included or excluded. If intellectual sympathy be your touchstone, for every one gratified there will be two miffed, and so on with all other classifications. Attempts have been made to obviate this difficulty. One lady proposed to consider as congenial all those who keep carriages, but the circle proved so very dull, that she was obliged to exert her ingenuity for another common quality by which to arrange her soirées. Another tried the experiment of inviting her fashionable friends at one time, her husband's political friends at another, and the religious friends whom both were desirous to propitiate, at another; but her task was as perplexing as that of the man who had the fox, the goose, and the bag of oats to ferry over the river in a boat that would hold but one of them at a time. So large parties have it; and in the murky shadow of this simulacrum of sociability we are likely to freeze for some time to come; certainly until all purely mercantile calculation is banished from our civilities.

It is with visiting as with travelling; those who would make the most of either must begin by learning to *renounce*. We cannot do everything; and to enjoy our friends we must curtail our acquaintances. When we would kindle a fire, we do not begin by scattering the coals in every direction; so neither should we attempt to promote social feeling by making formal calls one or twice a

year. If we give offence, so be it; it shows that there was nothing to lose. If we find ourselves left out of what is called fashionable society, let us bless our stars, and devote the time thus saved to something that we really like. What a gain there would be if anything drove us to living for ourselves and not for other people; for our friends, rather than for a world, which, after all our sacrifices, cares not a pin about us!

# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DRESS.

A YEAR or two ago, Blackwood, that 'nest of spicery,' gave us a series of brilliant papers on the Æsthetics of Dress, replete with such valuable practical hints, that the *bon ton* should have given the writer a statue, draped on his own principles of taste and fitness; not classic, perhaps, but deserving to become so. We considered him, at the time, a public benefactor, and hoped to see the truths he rendered so obvious make their due impression on our beaux and belles, 'well-preserved' bachelors, and ladies of a certain age; guarding them against some of the nameless but hideous errors which disguise beauty and render ugliness conspicuous. The application has not been as general as we could have desired. We still see triple skirts on squab-figures; blush-roses on three-score; scarlet flowers neighboring flaxen ringlets, and huge shawls enveloping forms which, under the most favorable circumstances, would remind one but too surely of Salmagundi's comparison of 'a bed and bolster, rolled up in a suit of curtains.' If we had our will, those papers would be republished in pamphlet form, and scattered all over the land, that our nascent gentility might be trained in the growing. Dress may still be considered in a state of nature with us. Not that it is original or inventive; far from these! but running wild, in the direction of expense; as the pumpkin-vine darts out its dispro-

portioned arms towards the brook, which will do nothing for it, after all, since it cannot nourish its roots.

This beneficent Blackwoodian having said all that could be said of dress as a concern of the eyes merely, we propose, in our sober way, to take up the subject from a somewhat graver side, considering dress as having a meaning, or as being an expression of sentiment. Not to be frightfully serious, is all we can promise our youthful readers. If they should feel a tap now and then, we must say to them as the conscientious Quaker did to his wife when he was administering domestic discipline,—'Why does thee cry so? It's all for thy own good!"

Dress may serve as either a grave or a gay subject. For those who relish satire, what can afford fairer game than the blunders of some unfortunate people, who, having come into possession of plenty of money, are more guided by costliness than taste in their choice of costume? What overdoing and overlaying, what contradiction and monotony, what frippery and furbelow, marks the trappings of such? No militia adjutant on parade, no pet fire-engine in a procession, was ever worse bedizened. Who has not seen a lady get into a dusty omnibus with her pearl-colored skirts fluttering with flounces, her crape bonnet tremulous with flowers, her white shawl lustrous with embroidery, her wrists manacled with golden fetters and dangling lockets; her laces, her delicate gloves, her silver card-case, her glittering chains all *point-de-vice*—and—all shocking! We pity where we are expected to admire—that is, we call by the amiable name of pity a feeling which, more severely construed, would be found to border closely on contempt. Each portion of the *tout ensemble* is beautiful; perhaps even the whole might not be offensive for some particular and private display; but for an omnibus! There is something profane in the public eye, and therefore the outdoor costume

of a well-bred woman should never be such as to attract and fix it, at least in particulars, or by reason of costliness or show.

Moralizers sometimes say we should not judge of people by their dress. But we may and ought, though without transgressing the law which this wise saw is intended to imply, supposing it to mean that we are not to despise those who are not dressed richly or with elegance. It is true some good people dress badly, judged by the common standard; yet dress must be characteristic where it is the result of free choice; even the beggar may wear his rags 'with a difference.' The sentimental novelists, who have in general no great insight, have discovered this; virtuous poverty is, with them, always picturesque. We, however, who deal with common facts rather than with uncommon fancies, should hardly think it fair to judge the very poor by their dress. We speak only of those to whom costume is a subject of reflection and of taste. This class is quite numerous enough to afford matter for our paper.

People who live in a state of abstraction must of course be excused for sins against taste in dress. Grave and reverend professors have been known to do or leave undone strange things; the outward man suffering in proportion as the inner soared to the depths sublime of science or speculation. A letter-writer from Germany describes the celebrated Neander as going one degree beyond Dominie Sampson, in indifference to popular prejudice on this subject. And Goethe tells a good story of Gottsched, a German *savant* whom he visited at Leipzig, who entered the room, when summoned to receive stranger guests, with his monstrous bald head totally uncovered; and when his servant rushed in with a great full-bottomed peruque, which was his head-gear of ceremony, dealt the unfortunate lackey a sound box on the ear for not having put it on him before he had exhibited himself in such a ridiculous plight; talking all the while

with the most perfect coolness and self-possession. There used to be an old scandal against literary ladies, charging them with carelessness in respect of appearance. Pope, after he quarrelled with his adored Lady Mary, was never tired of holding up her slatternly habits as the consequence of bookish propensities; but this is exploded now. Literary ladies are not easily distinguishable from other women by any outward marks; and it would probably startle a gentleman to be received, as tradition says an American *bas-bleu* of the last century received a visiter of distinction—with her head tied up in brown paper and vinegar, a folio resting on her lap, and her feet immersed in hot water!

Grave occupations cannot be supposed to interfere with due attention to dress in all cases, for the clergy are the best dressed men among us; even the most dressed, if we except the small class of fledgling exquisites, whose minds the tie of a cravat is sufficient to fill. Although not bound to a particular costume, as in England, our clergy may almost be said to dress in uniform, for the black suit and the white cravat mark them unmistakeably. And the threadbare appearance that we have read of, as sometimes characterizing the less fortunate members of the profession in former days, would be a phenomenon; nobody now living ever saw a shabby suit of clerical black. One would think the whole class passed daily through the hands of those ingenious persons who advertise to make worn cloth "look equal to new." We cannot deny that there is something pleasant to us in this reminiscence of the day when a gentleman was distinguishable by his dress. The plainness, approaching even to neglect, observable in grave men of other professions, shocks our cherished prejudices. We would have the scholar look like a scholar; let him be "melancholy" if he will, so he be "gentlemanlike." It is his right and duty. It is true.

A heavenly mind
May be indifferent to its house of clay,
And slight the hovel as beneath its care—

but there is a fitness in the 'customary suit of solemn black' for the man who deals with grave matters. How should we like to see Hamlet flaunting in buff and blue; or Dr. Primrose in plaid neck-cloth and corduroys?

Lockhart describes Mr. Crabbe, standing in the midst of half a dozen stalwart Highlanders at Sir Walter Scott's, the Celts in full costume on the occasion of the King's visit to Edinburgh; the poet-clergyman, dressed in the highest style of professional decorum, with powdered head, buckles in his shoes, and whatever else was befitting one of his years and station. The Highlanders mistook the church-man for some foreign Abbé, or, as one account says, for a French dancing-master, and began to talk French to him; while he, in his turn, supposed them to be a parcel of wild and rather dangerous savages. It was only after Sir Walter entered the room and introduced his friends to each other, that they discovered themselves to be all equally peaceable British gentlemen, made strangers to each other only by being at the antipodes of dress.

It has been the well-motived atttempt of some moralists to represent dress as a thing of no consequence; undeserving the attention of a rational being. But truth and nature are too strong for this compulsive pedantry of purism. Every man, woman, and child, knows that dress is a thing of consequence to the wearer; and all the biographers bear testimony to fact that it is also important to the beholder; for they never fail to describe the habitual costume of their subject where it can be ascertained, as at least one means of insight into character. Could we have pardoned Mr. Boswell if he had given us no hint of Dr. Johnson's 'vest unbuttoned, and

wig awry;' his shabby snuff-colored study suit, and the laced one which he put on when great doings were on the carpet? Or could we have believed him if he had described his hero prim and powdered, silk-stockinged, and shining-shoed? Goldsmith, with his gnawing desire to be liked, confessed the importance of dress, by going beyond his means in finery, which he imagined would help to hide his awkwardness, when he was to meet those whom he wished to please. Madame Goethe, the poet's mother, when she prepared to receive a visit of honor from Madame de Staël, arrayed herself so gorgeously in dazzling silks, with nodding plumes of two or three colors, that Bettina came near fainting with laughter; and the same Bettina, who found the good lady's desire to strike so ridiculous, has lost the respect of the world by a personal neglect far more offensive than the most mistaken efforts to please. How many descriptions of costume are to be found in Horace Walpole's acrid letters! One would think his soul might once have inhabited the body of a court-milliner. And with what gusto does Pepys dwell upon his purchases of rich attire for himself and his wife—'a night-gown, a great bargain at 24s.,' and 'the very stuff for a cloak cost £6, and the outside of a coat £8,' costume being, evidently, in his eyes, one of the great engines of human life. Novelists of all classes confess the significance of dress, when they devise expressive gowns and ornaments for their heroines, and appropriate drapery for their terrible and grotesque characters. Richardson understood this matter perfectly. In order to set Sir Charles Grandison and Miss Byron distinctly before us, every article they wore is described; color, form, texture, and cost. Miss Burney showed her sympathy with her sex, by confessing the temptations of dress to young ladies in society. Part of Camilla Tyrold's terrible troubles, over which so many youthful tears have been shed, arose from her having been led into

extravagance by the example of Mrs. Berlinton, and the wiles of Mrs. Mittin, and so running her father in debt until he was thrown into jail on her account. Sir Walter Scott does not disdain to expatiate largely on the costume of his figures, and to show that to him dress was as truly part of the man or woman, as the more strictly natural and indispensable envelopings of the soul. His own dress had a suitable sturdiness, expressive of the true, manly, human side of his character; that side which had withstood the conventional temptations and delusions too potent with us all. 'An old green shooting-jacket, with a dog-whistle at the button-hole, brown linen pantaloons, stout shoes that tied at the ankles, and a white hat that had evidently seen service,' constituted the array in which the 'mighty minstrel' came limping down the gravel-walk at Abbotsford to meet Washington Irving. When he dressed for dinner, he appeared in black, as became the gentleman and the poet. Now, the broad-backed coat, the heavy shoes, and the stout stick, are shown in the hall closet at Abbotsford, sad and most characteristic memorials of one to whose gifted eye trifles were instinct with meaning.

It is somewhat to be wondered at, that a people so notedly shrewd as the Society of Friends, should have set themselves deliberately at stemming a current which evidently takes its rise somewhere deep in the foundations of our being; and still more that they should have attempted to reduce the importance and seductiveness of dress by making it an object of strenuous attention. There is, however, much that is rational in a utilitarian point of view, as well as much plausibility in a religious one, in their stringent rules as to form, color, and expensiveness in costume. The form is intended as a protest against the silly evanescence of the fashions, which, not satisfied with changing as often as the moon, scarcely outlast the lunar rainbow. The regulated cut is that which all the

world wore when the sect first assumed a distinct existence. The prevailing drab has an obvious intent, as excluding gay and attractive colors, which are apt to beguile young eyes and thoughts. The proscription of certain rich and costly materials respects the general caution against conformity to the worldly standard, which is that of cost, and also the duty of reserving our means for better objects than mere outward beautifying. It needs no argument to show the excellence of these latter reasons for plain dress; and society gives them the assurance of its approval, by making it the most frequent ground of sarcasm against the Quakers, that they indemnify themselves for plain cut and color by wearing the most expensive fabrics, an inconsistency too obvious for excuse. Whether this general charge be just or not, it is certain that many conscientious Friends would as soon wear scarlet gowns as silken ones, or dashing waistcoats as fine broadcloth.

One advantage of the plain or Quaker dress is that it renders neatness indispensable. What is partly dust-colored already, becomes intolerable after it has contracted any soil; and the nature of the soft neutral tints is such, that whatever is worn with them must be pure, or it is shown up, inevitably. Lace may be yellow, and rich ribands crumpled, with small offence; but a plain cap depends for its beauty upon snowy whiteness and a perfect accuracy and primness of outline. 'The very garments of a Quaker,' says Charles Lamb, 'seem incapable of receiving a soil; and cleanliness in them to be something more than the absence of its contrary. Every Quakeress is a lily: and when they come up in bands to their Whitsun conferences, whitening the easterly streets of the metropolis, they show like troops of the Shining Ones.' Every one is charmed with this dress in its perfection; we never hear any one say it is not beautiful, at least on young women, whose fresh faces

do not need the relief of undulating laces or rich colors. The primness of the style, and the habitual or enforced placidity of the countenances of those who use it, have given occasion for charges of affectation or coquetry in the young sisters. But they may be consoled: for the imputation of trying to be charming is, in this case, only a confession that they are so.

The grace and beauty of the Quaker dress depends—as all that is lovely in outward manifestation must—upon its being a true expression of the spirit. Where it is simply formal, it is hard and ungainly; where it is compulsory, it betrays the wearer's true tastes and wishes by unconscious deviations from the standard, and leanings towards the forbidden. Where it is worn on conviction, it is exact and not unbecoming; but if the result of enthusiasm, it becomes classic and elegant as Roman drapery. We have seen a Friend who, without the least ostentation, refrained from wearing anything that had been dyed, preferring garments of the natural color, as being the extreme of simplicity. The world might laugh at such a twilight-gray as this combination of soft browns produced, but the painter would have found in it something congenial to his eye, and a peculiar value in the power with which it set off a fresh, ruddy complexion and silver hair. We remember a full-length picture of Thorwaldsen, painted in Italy, which reminded us, in its truly Quaker dress, of the undyed Friend we had seen years before. It is noticeable that sculptors have no escape from the difficulties of modern costume, except in a near approach to the simplicity of the Quaker garb. If the marble man must have a coat on, the sculptor perforce shaves off all lappels and finicalities, and comes as near a seamless garment as possible—giving unconscious testimony to the essential good taste of the followers of George Fox.

It is the compulsoriness of this dress that spoils it as an expres

sion of taste or sentiment. If it had been left to every man's conscience whether to adopt or to reject the uniform, it would have continued to have a meaning. As convictions deepened, indifference to worldly opinion would have become more and more evident, by the gradual disuse of worldly fashion, and conformity to the standard of denominational simplicity. But where no liberty is allowed, there can be no merit or significancy of choice. The plain garb becomes not a whit more dignified than any other uniform which is worn at peril of cashiering. Thousands whose conscience approve the tenets of the Friends, and whose taste and judgment favor extreme plainness and inexpensiveness of dress in people who profess serious aims in life, have been deterred from joining the society by a feeling that, to renounce one's judgment in a matter so personal as dress, is practically degrading. The garb is intended as an expression of a certain religious condition, yet it is to be worn with the strictest attention to arbitrary rules, the least deviation from which subjects the wearer to the interference of his fellow-Christians! This mistake towards bondage is one great reason why, while the principles of the Quakers are daily influencing those of the world more and more, the Society, as a society is on the decline. Religious liberty is more precious to the heart than any other; and the more sincere and ardent our desire to withstand the bad example of worldly people, the less should we be disposed to adopt any fixed outward symbol which might express a greater degree of renunciation than we had been able to reach.

There is, no doubt, a reflex influence in dress. One of the best ways of inspiring the degraded with self-respect is to supply them with decent and suitable clothing. We are wholly unable, at any stage of cultivation, to withstand this influence. No lady is the same in a careless and untasteful morning envelope, and an elegant

evening dress; the former lowers her tone—depreciates her to herself, even though the latter may be quite incapable of inspiring her with pride. No man feels quite at ease in a shining new coat; he is conscious of an inequality between his present self and the old friend whom he could have met so warmly yesterday. The friend may not notice the coat or its influence, but the wearer never forgets it. The Spectator, or some one of those cunning old observers, tells of a young lady who carried herself with unusual hauteur, and seemed to feel a new consciousness of power, upon no greater occasion than the wearing of a new pair of elegant garters. This affords an argument both for and against dress. We ought not to wear what makes us proud and creates a secret contempt of others; but neither should we neglect anything that aids our self-respect and keeps our spirits at the proper pitch. Some parents, from the best motives in the world, do their children serious injury by wilfully denying them such dress as may put them on an outward equality with their young companions, or make them feel equal. It is in vain to be philosophical for other people; we must convince their judgments and bring them over to our way of thinking, before we can obtain true and healthy conformity. We submit with tolerable grace to restraints rendered necessary by circumstances, but those which appear to us capricious or arbitrary do not often make us better, especially where they touch our pride—that tissue of irritable nerves in which our moral being is enwrapt.

Every one must have noticed the effect of dress upon the character and condition of servants. Those who have grown up in houses where slatternly personal habits are allowed, never become really respectable, even although they may have many good qualities. They do not respect themselves, and their sympathy with their employers is blunted by the great difference in outward appearance.

It is true that domestics sometimes act so earnestly upon this principle, that they end in erring on the side of too much attention to costume. We remember once, and once only, finding at a foreign hotel a chambermaid dressed in silk, with artificial roses in her hair; the feeling that she would not be of much use to us flashing across the mind at once. English servants hit the happy medium oftener than any other; their tidiness suggests alacrity, and we have a comfortable assurance of being well served, as soon as we look upon them. It is odd what a difference one feels in offering a gratuity to a well or ill-dressed attendant in travelling. Shabbiness favors our penuriousness, most remarkably! The eye scans the expectant instinctively, and instead of the generous impulse to give most liberally to those who need, we graduate our donation by the probable expectation of one who has evidently not found the world very generous. If the servant be well enough dressed to bespeak independence, and especially if he be gifted with the modest assurance which is often both cause and consequence of good fortune, pride whispers us at once not to disgust so genteel a person by a shabby gift, and we bestow on success what we should grudge to necessity.

Who can guess the influence of dress upon the soldier? What would be the spirit of an army in plain clothes, patched at the elbows, or even frosty at the seams? In this inquiry we bar the American Revolution, and the 'looped and windowed raggedness' of its heroes, as not being in point. We are speaking of soldiers by profession, not of men in arms for their altars and their fires. How many of our young men would seek commissions if the Quaker garb were prescribed? Sydney Smith speaks of the privilege of ornamenting one's head with the tail of a belligerent bird, and covering with gold lace the course of the ischiatic nerve, as among the strong reasons for military ardor, and he was doubtless right. If bravery

depended on the internal stock of solid, deliberate courage, there would be fewer soldiers: 'a swashing and a martial outside' inspires the imagination, at least, if not the reason. But what has reason to do with fighting, a matter in which cocks and bull-dogs are so far superior to men?

The conventual dress has evidently no little power over the imagination, and consequently over the character and feelings of the wearer. No one can see a nun without being sensible of this. There is such a careful significance about it, and it is so different in principle from the dress of the world, that it would seem as if worldly passions and affections could hardly live within it. The Black and the Gray nuns, of certain orders, wear bands of starched linen which entirely hide the forehead, cheeks, chin, and bust, while the back of the head and person is equally concealed by a veil of black serge, fastened at the crown and so arranged that a portion can be drawn over the eyes. This is the nun of our youthful fancy, and we cannot approach her without a degree of awe, while, on her part, she seems to feel herself a sacred person. Turn her out into the world and dress her like other women, and new cares and wishes would roll in upon her like a flood, for she would lack one continual memento, if not support, of her sanctity. Beads and breviaries would soon seem out of place among jewels and laces; as embarrassing as, *per contra*, were the flounces of a dashing dame whom we saw painfully toiling up the Scala Santa on her knees, and obliged to lift and manage her rebellious finery at every rise. The nuns at the Béguinage, near Ghent, wear great wide-bordered caps, like market-women, and so they seemed very much in place sitting in the shade of the wall, shelling beans, and chattering among themselves, with no great appearance or perhaps even feeling of dignity although they are said to be mostly high-born. We may urge this

reflex influence of dress against the indulgence of expensive or showy tastes. The appetite grows with what it feeds on; our standard rises with our habits. When we are used to the feeling which accompanies rich and *recherché* costume, a lower style seems to us mean and unworthy, especially on ourselves—it is well if the influence go no further. What pitiable instances we see of a depression that has no better source than the lack of means to dress expensively, after the habit had been formed; what a craven spirit is that which has nothing better to sustain it than the consciousness of elegant clothing! Poor human nature! Few of us dare profess to be free from this weakness. It is strange that literary efforts should be sometimes dependent on dress, yet we are assured that this is the case. One author can only write in dishabille, another in full dress. Richardson required a laced suit, and a diamond on his finger; Rousseau acknowledged a similar dependence at certain periods of his life. We once knew a minister who never wrote a good sermon unless he had his old study-gown on. Scott boasted that he never learned any of the night-gown-and-slipper tricks that literary men are apt to indulge in, but pursued his avocations in his ordinary gear. Lady-authors do not let the world into the secrets of their boudoir; but we suspect few of them write with arms covered with bracelets, or waists compressed to French-print pattern, however they may own subjection to these vanities in their ordinary states. Literary pursuits have certainly some slight tendency to preserve the mind from too exclusive devotion to appearance; let this atone for some of the sins which they are supposed to favor.

One vice of dress literary ladies are accused of, and sometimes justly, viz.: a predilection for the picturesque. We call this a *vice* of dress, because it generally makes the wearer remarkable, and not pleasantly so. Dress may be sometimes individual without offence;

ordinarily, good taste and good breeding require that it should, in its general aspect, conform to the common standard, not to an ideal one peculiar to the wearer. It must be remembered that costume which would serve admirably for a picture or a description, may be quite unpresentable in a drawing-room. In the old satirical novel of Cherubina, or the Heroine, the lady, impassioned for the picturesque, takes 'an entire piece of the finest cambric,' and disposes it most statuesquely about her person. 'A zone, a clasp, and a bodkin,' she says, 'completed all!' But the result was disastrous. Far short of this extreme, we have seen imaginative ladies make the most extraordinary figure in company, from the indulgence of an individual taste in dress, instead of a modest acquiescence with the reigning mode.

'What! be a slave to fashion!' 'No, but make fashion your servant, by using it just so far as it serves your purpose, *i. e.*, enables you to present a becoming and respectable appearance in society.' We venture to say that it is hardly possible to respect anybody who is fantastically dressed. To differ much from others in this matter, bespeaks a degree of thought and plan on the part of the wearer, which detracts from dignity of character. We all like the company of even an ultra-fashionist, made up by tailors or milliners, better than of one who forces us to notice trifles, by appearing in array so peculiar as to strike the eye while it offends the habit, at least, if not the judgment. To be passive under the hands of people who make it their business to study the forms, effect, and harmony of dress is surely wiser than to usurp their office, for which one's own habitual employments are likely to do anything but prepare. A veto power must be reserved, however, for people who live always in an atmosphere of decoration are rather prone to overdress one, if they are not

watched. Eyes accustomed to a furnace glare may learn to deem the light of common day ineffectual.

Women generally have an intense dislike to the picturesque style in female dress, and they are not at all apt to think favorably of the stray sheep who adopt it. Some 'ill-avis'd' persons fancy that ladies dress for the eyes of gentlemen, but this opinion shows little knowledge of the sex. Gentlemen dress for ladies, but ladies for each other. The anxiety that is felt about the peculiarities of fashion, the chase after novelty, the thirst for expense, all refer to women's judgment and admiration, for of these particulars men know nothing. Here we touch upon the point in question. Women who depart from fashion in search of the picturesque are suspected of a special desire to be charming to the other sex, a fault naturally unpardonable, for ought we not all to start fair? Has any individual a right to be weaving private nets, and using unauthorized charms? A lady who values her character, had better not pretend to be independent of the fashion. The extra admiration of a few of her more poetical beaux will not compensate for the angry sarcasms she must expect from her own sex. This is a matter in which we find it hard to be merciful, or even candid.

Shall the becoming, then, be sacrificed to the caprices of fashion, which consults neither complexion, shape, nor air, but considers the female sex only as a sort of dough, which is to be moulded at pleasure, and squeezed into all possible forms, at the waving of a wand? We do not go so far. There are rules of taste—standards of grace and beauty—boundaries of modesty and propriety—restraints of Christian benevolence. Saving and excepting the claims of these, we say follow the fashion enough to avoid singularity, and do not set up to be an inventor in costume.

Of the artifices of dress, we might say a good deal, if we were not

afraid of growing intolerably serious. Not so much the artifices by which defects of person are rendered less noticeable, as those which are intended to compass an appearance beyond our means. This leads to mock jewelry, and various other meannesses, as well as to that vicious habit of shopping which tempts the salesman to dishonesty, by showing him it is vain to hope to sell good articles at fair prices. 'We've been cutting up several whole pieces of lace into *remnants*,' said a shopman the other day, in our hearing, 'because ladies will not buy unless we have remnants for them.' And the time that is spent in walking miles in chase of bargains, which generally prove dear enough in the end, might be considered worse than wasted, if it were not that there is some exercise for the muscles in this sort of enterprise. It is true that the desire to get what the English call your 'pen'orth,' is a natural one, and that it is not very easy to draw the line between a proper care of one's money, and too great a solicitude to obtain 'cheap things.' Nobody knows with certainty, except the purchaser herself, what is the motive, and what the merit or demerit of the labor she submits to in shopping; *but she knows very well*, and to her must the decision be referred. If a weak hankering after a style of dress more costly than we can honestly afford, causes us to shop in a mean and grasping way, we, at least know it, whether any one else discovers it or not, and it is a matter very well worth an hour's thought and sifting.

There is, perhaps, nothing more hardening to the heart, in a small way, than the habit here alluded to. After we have once set our mark too high, and are straining every nerve to approach it, no spare dollar is ever at our command for a benevolent or friendly purpose. The too-great toils of an anxious husband—painful contrasts with less aspiring or less successful friends—the half-paid labors of

the poor seamstress who contributes to further our selfish aims—the sight of suffering which has just claims upon us—all are as nothing and less than nothing. Conscience, pity, and affection are not more surely blunted by any of the so-called minor offences, than by a pursuit of dress in this temper. The competition is too keen for friendship, too petty for generosity, almost too grasping for honesty. We have high authority for believing that it has even been known to lead to insanity, and, judging by some extreme cases within our notice, we can well imagine it. A pursuit so futile, so inimical to all that is serious and ennobling, can hardly be safe; for Nature will revenge herself when we trample her best gifts under foot, and insist on choosing for ourselves a position in the scale of being far lower than that which she assigns us.

The practice of wearing mourning for departed friends, once universal in this country, has fallen into disuse in no inconsiderable degree. Many persons decline wearing it from a conscientious scruple—saying, that although it is undoubtedly a gratification to our feelings to discard all gay colors when the heart is oppressed with grief, yet the practice among the richer classes of wearing mourning, leads the poor—whose grief is equally sincere, and who feel the same desire to show respect for the memory of the dead—into expenses they cannot afford. Even among that large class whose means barely suffice for a genteel appearance, it often happens that to lay aside all the clothing already prepared for a family, and buy a new outfit of expensive materials, is extremely inconvenient, and leads to painful sacrifices for an inadequate cause.

This has always appeared to us rather a difficult point. To those whose only law of conduct is implied in the inquiry, 'What will people say?' it is not a question at all; since the bare possibility that their conduct will become the subject of remark, would operate

so powerfully with them as to exclude all consideration of the intrinsic propriety of any action. Nor to that other kind of mourners whose anxiety for "fashionable,' and 'becoming,' and 'proper' mourning, often fills the house of death with bustle and animation, even while the cold remains which gave the excuse for new dresses, are lying almost forgotten in the next room. These are the last to inquire into the meaning or effects of the custom. Its poetry, its philosophy, its utility, its morality concerns them not. But to those whose hearts really long for some means of expressing their unavailing sorrow, who hate the sight of all that is gay, and almost of the blessed sun himself, during the first paroxysm of grief, there is often a doubt as to the propriety of indulging the natural feeling; and many have, at a great sacrifice, given up the wearing of mourning, from the consideration to which we allude—the inconvenience resulting to the poor from attempting to follow a fashion which their feelings prompt, as much as those of their more fortunate neighbors.

We acknowledge the excellence of the motive, and the truth of the objection; yet we confess an increasing reluctance to see a time-hallowed custom falling into disuse among those whose true and loving hearts would give it its real consecration. Besides the poetry of a 'garb of woe,' to give an outward shadow of the grief within there is a mute appeal to human sympathy, not without its uses in a world where every change is towards the cold individuality that affects to scorn all acknowledgment of mutual dependence. There is a touch of nature about it. The most afflicted man of old said, 'Pity me, oh my friends! for the hand of God has touched me!' and from his day to ours, such is the true and natural language of the heart unhardened by pride and conventional refinement. We long for sympathy, however unavailing; and though there is a mad

and wilful sorrow that repels it with disdain, this is but the raving of an unsubdued spirit, rebelling against the hand that smites, and venting on the creature the anger whose real object is the Creator. When the better moment comes, and reason and religion restore the sufferer to himself, the deeper his affliction, the more sensible will he be to the humblest expression of sympathy. Those who feel not have not yet known grief.

In a certain class of society, the extreme punctiliousness with which all the rules for a 'proper' mourning costume are carried out, is in strange contrast to the superiority to human sympathy which is affected by the individuals concerned. So determined are they to own nothing in common with ordinary clay, that they resent, as an impertinent personalty, any particular inquiry after the health of a member of the family who is evidently wasting with consumption, or swollen with dropsy. They resolutely throw a veil over the infirmities of nature, and affect not to believe that what they love,

'Like common earth can rot.'

And when the bolt has fallen, and it is impossible longer to conceal the humiliating fact of a perishable nature like that of the meanest beggar, with what a haughty disdain they seclude themselves from all eyes—except the dressmaker's—leaving to hirelings all that relates to the last disposition of the remains, watchful only that no cost or ceremony which may vindicate the claims of an unapproachable superiority may be lacking. Yet these very people, secluded in all the dignity of aristocratic grief, may often be found in most anxious consultation with the 'artists' indispensable on such occasions, as to the width of a hem, the length of a weeper, or the latest style of a shroud! And all this with reference to an impression on the very multitude whom they affect to despise.

A mourning garb is not without its utility, in reminding of our loss, company who might otherwise forget that mirth would be distasteful; and in accounting for a grave and sad countenance, which might call forth remark or inquiry, which it would be painful to answer. There may be cases, too, and we think we could point to more than one, where bombazine and crape have served to keep in the minds of the younger and more thoughtless members of a family, that gaiety did not become those who had experienced a loss that could never be repaired, or even those who had recently passed through the sad scenes incident to a death in the house. But these considerations referring merely to the outward, are of small consequence.

The conscientious scruple to which we referred, is one which we owe to the Puritanic spirit, among many good things and some of questionable advantage. The cultivation of an ever present regard for the good of others is always commendable, but we must take the wide and not the narrow view as to what *is* the best good of those whom we would benefit. The domestic affections are among the best safeguards of virtue; and whatever tends to keep these alive and warm is of incalculable value. The utilitarian view, which would curtail as much as possible the sorrow for the dead, is a chilling and injurious one; and if mourning garments contribute in any degree to prolong the tender impression, we should be willing that even the poor should make considerable sacrifices to procure them. We should be still better pleased to see the rich provide them for their poor neighbors, making their own a little less costly, if necessary, in order to gratify this natural feeling. Nothing valuable is gained by deadening the sensibilities, yet it would seem to be the error of some very good people to imagine that those in whom they take an interest, are never quite in the right way until they subside into mere

machines. The sacrifices which are made to procure something much desired, are in themselves not without good effect; and when that something is far removed from any gross or frivolous pleasure, the very effort is enobling in a greater or less degree.

The practice of wearing some outward sign of mourning upon the death of a relative is, we believe, as universal as sorrow itself. It would seem to be a dictate of nature to signalize the departure of a human soul from this busy scene of hopes and fears, by a change in the outward appearance of those who survive. Philosophy may teach that

> The golden sun,
> The planets, all the infinite host of heaven,
> Are shining on the sad abodes of death,
> Through the still lapse of ages. All that tread
> The globe are but a handful to the tribes
> That slumber in its bosom:

and that it is therefore absurd to bewail the adding of a unit to the untold millions gone before. Religion may assure us, that in spite of the dread outward change, and the removal of the earthly tabernacle from our sight forever, the freed soul knows no interruption to its life, but rejoices in continuous and unbroken existence, endowed with powers unknown before, and new capacities for the comprehension of eternal truth. Yet death is awful to all, and the veriest savages make its occurrence the occasion of solemn rites and personal humiliation. Let us beware then how we interfere to counteract an obvious dictate of nature.

There seems a peculiar fitness in black as the color of mourning —so much so, that it seems a little remarkable that various colors should have been chosen by different nations for this purpose. The hue which absorbs and hides all the rays that brighten the face of creation, typifies well the chastened state of mind in which one idea

is of power sufficient to drink up, as it were, all the rest; so that thoughts which are the source of comfort at other times, are either indifferent or absolutely displeasing. Black is the color of the cloud that hides the sun—of the gloomy cave—the shaded pool—the cheerless midnight of the lonely watcher. It is the hue of decayed nature—the image of the literal shadow which seems to rest upon all outward objects when the delight of our eyes is removed at a stroke. The black veil of the mourner enables her to weep unobserved—no trifling boon, when even the most trivial occurrence or ordinary object brings up the image of the loved and lost.

The punctilio of mourning—on which we set but little value—is much more closely observed in Europe than in this country. There, no person thinks of going to a funeral in any but a black dress—those who are not in the habit of wearing it, keeping a suit for this purpose. Every scrap of paper, card, fan, watch-ribbon, must bear some sign of grief; and while etiquette is as closely consulted as ever, the whole aspect of the household is changed. Not only do those in mourning use black seals, but it is considered but polite for those unconnected to seal with black in return. Some of these petty observances are gaining ground among us, but we would not have our observations respecting the uses of a mourning dress considered as including them. They have little to do with the real meaning of the custom.

In one respect we would gladly see our young countrywomen take a lesson from the English, in the matter of mingling in the gayeties of the world, while still shrouded in the dress which tells of a lost friend. If we may believe Pope, the ladies of his time were sometimes known

> To bear about the mockery of wo,
> To midnight dances and the public show;

but a purer taste now prevails. Among us the anomaly is but too common. We have seen even a widow, in all the excitement of a dance, with a scarf of black crape floating behind her, and her black dress looking like an ominous cloud in the midst of gauze and roses. But we would hope such sights are rare.

Almost all ornaments are out of place in mourning. Flounces and furbelows are a miserable solecism, and black *flowers* an odious mockery. The moment we feel a desire for these things, we should honestly throw aside the semblance of wo, and confess that we are quite ready for the world again. Perhaps one of the objections to mourning is, that it gives occasion to no little hypocrisy of this sort.

The practice of wearing mourning is one in which all the world has seemed, until now, to be of one mind. The savage wears knife-cuts, the Jew, a beard—the Oriental ashes—the Anglo-Saxon, bombazine and weepers—and so on, through a strange variety, among which must be counted the flame-robe of the Hindoo widow, probably in many cases no whit more truly significant than the less costly one of her white sister. An impulse thus universal must needs be referred to no manufactured sentiment. In spite of the Quaker and the rationalist—who find reasons quite conclusive, on their principles, against the practice—we must consider the impulse to put on a garb significant of grief, as a perfectly natural one. The immediate presence of sorrow is absorbing and exclusive. Even the affection of survivors is of little value to us while bereavement is fresh. The mind, insanely devoted to one topic, can entertain other thoughts only as they point to that. It would have the world and its concerns at a stand, that nothing may hinder the indulgence and fostering of its misery. Society is nothing to it—the customs of life are empty or irksome—the living are vulgar—only the dead precious and sublime. It is in this mood that mourning weeds

originate—this is the theory of them. Practically—and here arise the objections to them—they are quite another thing.

The peculiar dignity of grief is that it brings the sufferer into immediate contact with the supernatural world. No matter how hard or how world-spoiled the heart—no matter how vitiated the imagination or the habits—when one that we love with our strong, human, instinctive love, is stricken down before our eyes, we see the Hand that deals the blow, and the occasion at once rises to the grandeur of a divine visitation. To cherish sorrow becomes on this account honorable; it individualizes us, and raises us above the common, careless herd; we have had direct communication with the mysterious Unknown; we have a right to be distinguished. But this, being a passionate state, does not naturally endure. The present resumes its hold upon us, and we feel that we are falling into the line again, not willingly, but by an irresistible power—that of habit. Mourning garments do something towards arresting this tendency; they at least serve to remind ourselves and those about us that we have been among high thoughts—that we have had heart experiences which in some degree revealed us to ourselves, and so raised us for the time, above demeaning daily influences.

This being the signification of grief and its symbols, counterfeits become inevitable. While there is nothing which people repel more indignantly than the imputation of insensibility under bereavement, it must be that mourning is often worn as a mere form. Instead of being a voluntary putting away of the vanity of dress—a purposed disfiguring of ourselves to the living, out of devotion to the idea of the dead—it becomes as finical and ostentatious as a coronation robe, and sits as incongruously on the wearer. Whether we ought, for the sake of such instances, to condemn the wearing of mourning altogether, may still be a question. In discussing the

significance of dress, we touch its morals only incidentally, reserving what we may have to say on that topic, for another occasion.

The array of the body for the grave—everywhere a point of sacred interest—has a meaning, of course, though at our stage of civilization it is not always an obvious one. In countries more under the acknowledged influence of primitive ideas than our own, there are various picturesque and beautiful decorations of the lifeless form, as flowers, ribbands, and even robes of ceremony. There is an attempt to throw something like illusion over what is in itself revolting—to withstand the death-chill as long as possible by suggestions of life's sunshine. This attempt marks timid, poetical, and sensitive races; to our sturdiness there is a sort of savage pleasure in facing death in all his horrible distinctness. We banish whatever looks like the garb of living men. We choose forms and tints that insure a cadaverous aspect to the dead, and make him as unlike the breathing, hopeful yesterday as possible. It would seem almost sacrilegious to us to lay him in the earth 'in his habit as he lived;' to dress him in rich robes, as for solemn audience, would be so revolting that we could hardly expect friends to be found adventurous enough to countenance the last rites. Yet why should this be so? Why should we put weapons into the hand of death, wherewith to pierce our own souls, and help the grave to its too easy victory over the imagination? Why not consent to greater simplicity of reception of the last enemy? To figure death as a grinning skeleton has not the moral effect we think it has; it is only a confession of weakness. The poetical image of a beautiful female folding a sleeping infant to her bosom, and bearing it softly away, amid the hush of night, to the distant spheres, inspires loftier and more dutiful thoughts of the change decreed alike to all, and necessarily beneficent.

We have hardly done more in this paper than express our opinion that the expression of our dress is nearly as characteristic as that of our faces; but if we have put our readers upon thinking the matter out for themselves, we shall be content. We would fain redeem them from the tyranny of French prints, which, made for sale, and not faithful transcripts of the graceful and artistically chaste costume of the Parisian *élégante*, have done much to introduce a gaudy and vicious style among us—a style which, in very many cases, would not bear interpreting on the principles here advanced.

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Note. In treating of the significance of dress, we might be expected to say something of the so-called 'Bloomer' costume, which has excited a good deal of notice lately, and brought out many opinions pro and con. As to the propriety of this dress, we never entertained any doubt; as to its grace and beauty, we remain as yet unconvinced. We look upon it as entirely modest, and not unfeminine, our prejudices in favor of more flowing drapery to the contrary notwithstanding; but to cut the figure by a short skirt, is contrary to all rules of art where dignity is to be expressed. Youthful lightness and agility are well typified in this way; and accordingly, no one objects to the 'robe succinct' for our half-grown daughters. But when the matron assumes a costume of similar character, we consider her as sacrificing beauty to utility—very commendable sometimes, but not necessary always. The reformers in dress fall into an error common with reformers—of claiming too much for their plan. It is well to recommend a convenient dress for its merits, but it is not well to attempt to show that all other dresses are absurd. The prettiest name yet devised for the new costume is the 'Camilla.' For,

> 'Swift Camilla scours the plain,
> Flies o'er th' unbending corn and skims along the main;'

and as the dress is especially advocated on account of allowing the free use of the limbs, this classical designation is peculiarly appropriate.

## CONVERSATION.

Our best gifts are least praised, perhaps least prized. Whatever outward good enters into the very texture of our life's life, has little chance of being duly honored. Those pleasures, without which we should be wretched, we treat as insignificant, because they are indispensable. It is so with conversation, a pleasure for which all men have a taste; one which is never relinquished except by compulsion, or some motive almost as potent. Says Emerson, 'Good as is discourse, silence is better and shames it;' but the world is far from understanding, or at least adopting this philosophy. The silence of monastic life is the highest triumph of asceticism; that of prison existence the utmost cruelty of the law. The sage loves conversation better than the child, for the very desire of acquiring makes him anxious to impart. Joy prattles; grief must talk or die; both are eloquent, for passion is always so. A feeling too strong for words is agony; if they be long withheld, it becomes madness. The chattering of youth is the overflow of animal spirits by the stimulus of new ideas; the garrulity of age seems an effort to excite the fainting animal spirits, by recalling the ideas which once stimulated them. Letter-writing is an effort at conversation; so indeed is essay-writing. Let us then have a talk about talking. Our

object shall be to show that we do not give it a due share of attention, or at least to inquire whether we do or not.

Goethe advises that we shall at least 'speak every day a few good words.' Do we concern ourselves about this when we are making up the day's account? Did we begin the day with any resolves about it, as if it were a thing of consequence, or have we maundered on, dropping tinkling words about trifles, or evil words like firebrands, or words of gloom and repining, insulting Providence, or words of hatred, piercing hearts that love us? Each day's talk is surely no trifle; we can hardly help sowing the germs of many thoughts in a twelve hours' intercourse with our co-mates, in the ordinary duties of life; and allowing our words only a negative value, we rob our friends of all the good and pleasure that we might bestow and do not. Young and old alike have claims upon us for the cheap gift of our good thoughts; the young, because it is their spring-time, and they must have good thoughts or bad ones, flowers or weeds; the old, for that life's troubles have cast so many shadows upon their minds, that it is cruel to let slip any chance of cheering them by means of whatever advantage we possess. If they despond habitually, a few rightly chosen words may present a new side of affairs for their relief; if they are soured, words of affection are all-powerful to neutralize such acids. Let us not dare to put them off with silence; in such a case it is a confession of the weakness of our virtue. Incommunicative households are only a step behind quarreling households. Some people are taciturn only because they cannot open their mouths without saying something disagreeable. They have just goodness enough to be silent, not enough to reform the inward sullenness of their temper.

There are those who have never even entertained the idea that under certain circumstances it may become a duty to talk. They

talk when they like, and when not moved by inclination they sit mum, leaving the trouble to others. That it is sometimes a trouble to talk is very true; the French have a proverbial saying which expresses this; they say of a talker, that he 'bore the expense' of the conversation. It is true too, that we feel as if we made a stupid figure in making an effort to talk. This is what the mum people of whom we are speaking think, and pride and selfishness prompt them to leave the disagreeable to others. O the misery of being obliged to ask one of these spirits to 'spend the day;' that trial of the soul to both hostess and guest! There is no use in offering books to such visiters; if reading were their habitual amusement, they would have some ideas. An Annual might do indeed; but the best resource is usually some new pattern in worsteds or crochet, and, if this does not do, to follow Miss Patty Proud's example—take the lady up stairs, and show her your finery. We are speaking of course of feminine bores, for happily gentlemen are never asked to spend the day; and if they were, they would probably soon get sound asleep upon the sofa. When you in despair propose a nap to your silent lady-friend, she is sure to tell you that she cannot sleep in the day-time; it is evidently her forte to be the cause of sleep in others.

Two young girls together are said to be like the side-bones of a chicken, "because they always have a merry-thought between them." And truly the giggling which generally ensues when a few young ladies get together would seem to justify the old riddle. It is hard to say whether what is said on these occasions is conversation or not. To settle the point it would be necessary to go into an analysis of their talk, which were foreign to our present purpose, as well as difficult for want of material, since no one has ever reported what is said under cover of so much laugh. To count the bubbles on the surface

of boiling water beneath a cloud of steam, were perhaps as easy, and as useful. But every age has its pleasures, and we must not quarrel with this. Sober days do not await our bidding.

Ball-room talk is equally beyond our pale. Its ineffable nothingness defies us. Fortunately conversation is not the characteristic pleasure of the ball-room. The West Indian lady understood this, who exclaimed impatiently to a friend of ours who had wearied her with trying to find a subject on which she would open her lips—"Cha, cha! I no come here for chatter, I come here for dance!" Happy were it if her notion were generally adopted. The harp and violin discourse more excellent music than can be expected from unhappy beaux, who, not very well furnished with ideas at the outset, must belabor their beseeching brains for something to say to ten young ladies in succession, all of different disposition, character, and education, and probably no better fitted for extempore conversation than their partners. The swain too often takes refuge in a silly strain of compliment, which makes the lady feel silly and look silly; and which, if she be silly enough to believe it sincere, may, to say the least, not add to her wisdom. What a perversion, to call this conversation, where no one word on either side is the sincere expression of the inward thought!

The dulness of our social visits is one of the commonest subjects of complaint. It is an evil not only recognised but guarded against, indirectly; for we often see a good deal of ingenuity exerted to elude an invitation without absolute falsehood or the certainty of giving offence. Unless some special inducement is offered, people feel that they will have a far better chance for enjoyment at home, with their ordinary pursuits, or among their books, than in a talking circle, who will hardly, by any chance, say a word that will either please or instruct. Dulness becomes thus a formidable ally of dissipation; the

votaries of vicious pleasure point with scorn at our stupid circles and affected coteries. "If your boasted morality," say they, "can afford nothing better than this, in the way of social enjoyment, you must excuse us if we prefer a mode of life which affords pleasure, at least. If excess is the bane of ours, inanity and hollowness are no less the reproach of yours." Can we reply to this taunt by an appeal to matters of fact? Can we silence the scorner of our boasted sobriety by assuring him that we enjoy the social intercourse he condemns? Can we quote in refutation of his opinion passages of value from last evening's conversation, or declare that our feelings of general benevolence and charity are kept warm by our social habits?

We are always sensible of the pleasure of conversation when it is what it should be; but we do not find it easy to prescribe rules for it. There are, indeed, plenty of formal rules, but they are too formal. We do not find that agreeable people talk by them, and we say such an one has a *gift* for conversation, as if confessing that rules have little to do with the matter. And indeed, how could we talk by rule any more than we can breathe by rule? We never think of counting or measuring the delicious inhalations of a rural walk, or those which sustain the life of a year. Talking is quite as natural and almost as necessary as breathing, for the few taciturn people we meet are only enough to prove the universality of the impulse. Of course we put out of the question those who are silent through sulkiness or stupidity, or by design, and consider only people who behave naturally. The deaf-mute, unprovided by nature with the facility for it enjoyed by others, show by their strenuous efforts to find a substitute, how dearly they prize the power of communicating their sentiments to those about them. Even Laura Bridgman, says Dr. Howe, to show the strength of the impulse to clothe our thoughts in words, 'often soliloquizes in the finger language, slow and tedious

as it is.' It is only we who have free use of the excellent gift of speech who treat it with neglect, not so much indeed by disuse, as by abuse.

The impulse to impart our thoughts is so strong that it is proverbially necessary to keep a guard over our lips lest we tell what should not be told. To what a pitch then must our sophistication by false notions of society have arisen, when we become able to talk for hours the very thing we do *not* think, pouring out empty words, while the under-current of our thoughts set in a quite different direction. The 'bald, disjointed chat' thus produced, is what we call 'conversation in company,' and no wonder we dread 'company!' A diet of stale crumbs and tepid water would be quite as agreeable. Listen to the conversation of a morning call.

First the health branch.

'How do you do—and how is your mother—and is your sister quite well—and has your aunt recovered?'—an unexceptionable strain of talk in itself, but usually a mere form, from the fact that we have had daily opportunities of ascertaining the condition of these good people, and know that nothing of consequence can have befallen them without our knowledge. It wears the semblance of friendly feeling and human sympathy, however, so we must not condemn it when it includes one grain of sincerity. But we proceed. 'My own health has been miserable. I have had——' And here follows a train of symptoms minutely given, even as to days and hours, with the fears of friends and the judgment of physicians, until the listener yawns so perceptibly that it is impossible to proceed. The children's cases come next, and it is well if their afflictions do not occupy the remainder of the visit.

Next comes the weather branch, if there be time enough.

'What dreadful weather we have had! It is enough to kill any

body. The thermometer fell ten degrees on Saturday. My brother, who has been all over the world, says that ours is the very worst climate on the face of the globe. Nobody *can* be well in such a climate," &c., until it is made perfectly clear that Providence, either through especial spite or general incapacity, is doing its worst for us in the way of weather.

From this gracious topic we go perhaps to the last party.

'Were you there? Oh, certainly—don't you remember our talking together for some time? Did you ever see any one look so much like a fright as Mrs. A——? And what a fool Mr. G—— is! Oh, I do think going to parties such a bore! I never go when I can decently refuse, but I have declined Mrs. B——'s invitations so often that I thought I must go for once. The gentlemen have the best of it; they are not obliged to appear before supper-time,' &c. &c. If there be any more time, dress fills it to overflowing. The fashions never fail to afford a multitude of remarks, criticisms, and ecstasies, very advantageous to the milliners, but tiresome enough in themselves to all but the initiated.

It may be remarked that the subjects here adverted to make up the conversation of ladies only, but we were speaking of morning calls, which gentlemen never make. The gentlemen have one staple subject on all occasions—that of party politics; and this their chosen theme doubtless appears to them far more dignified and worthy of attention than those which occupy the thoughts of women. Whether it be so in the manner in which it is ordinarily handled, may admit of questions, but it is a question which we shall not presume to touch here. If there be anything which is held sacred in our country, it is the propensity of the men to talk politics. It is difficult to obtain belief for the truth that one rarely hears anything said of politics in good society abroad. "What other subjects *can*

men talk about?" One would think there were no intermediate topics of interest between this most earthy one and the 'celestial colloquy sublime," once held in Paradise: but in considering what is or what is not the conversation which makes social gathering delightful, which wakes up the best powers of the mind, calls forth the half-formed thoughts that had else slumbered in a sort of chaos for want of the vivifying influence, arouses all the most generous instincts of the heart, and furnishes the most soul-stirring pleasure that we are capable of enjoying—we cannot conscientiously assign to party politics a much more dignified place in our list of subjects than to the weather, or our bodily condition, though we confess it to rank above dress, which must be allowed to be below everything else that it is permissible to talk of in society.

The faults and follies of our neighbors and friends afford, perhaps, the most fertile of all subjects for conversation, when it is at all spontaneous. The study of character is one of the pleasures of life, but we are not particularly fond of exercising it upon ourselves, or at least of divulging the results of our practice. As surgeons choose the lifeless body for their demonstrations, so we try our skill upon the absent, and, as he can neither resist nor reply, that is very pleasant and advantageous—to the operator, who, not being forced to defend his positions, may expatiate at will, and having set out with a general theory or proposition, may easily, by the aid of a little imagination, make out a consistent view of the whole case. One inconvenience attending the use of this class of material for conversation, is the danger that the person dissected may not relish our view of his case as reported to him by some good-natured friend. His vanity may hinder his appreciating our discernment; he may mistake for spite or envy or unkindliness the keen perception on which we pride ourselves; he may not be able to consider himself as an ab-

straction, in which light, of course, we considered him when we demonstrated upon him, and we may thus lose his friendship just as we flattered ourselves we understood him thoroughly.

Then again the habit of discussing character in ordinary conversation is apt to be a little chilling, all round. It is hardly possible to feel quite at ease and to behave unconstrainedly, if we know that as soon as we depart we shall be coolly analyzed for the benefit of those who remain. We are not quite so confident of the impartiality and discernment of others as of our own, and we would rather not feel that every word and action of ours is being treasured up as material for future sketches of character. So that this style of conversation, while it exercises the intellect, is likely to harden the heart, and instead of diffusing an affectionate confidence through social intercourse, will probably end in putting each individual secretly on the defensive. Some frigid soul devised the maxim, 'Live always with your friend as if he might one day be your enemy;" and those must have kindred notions of the spirit of society, who consider the peculiarities and shades of character of their friends matter for habitual discussion.

There is indeed one way of avoiding the obvious danger of this theme,—that of giving offence to the absent,—namely, by making our discussion the vehicle of praise only. But is not this apt to become a little tiresome? In some families most of the conversation with visiters—we can judge of nothing further—consists in eulogies upon absent members of the household or connexion. Unhappily there is hardly enough disinterested sympathy in human nature to make this agreeable to persons who have not the advantage of belonging to those exemplary races. The perfections of those we love are a most fascinating subject for private contemplation, but they are hardly the topic for entertaining our guests withal. Nor are the in-

dividuals eulogized in all respects gainers by this enthusiastic enumeration of their excellences. Being human, they have probably still some remains of human imperfection, and these will be very apt to come up in full size before the memory or imagination of the listener, who is driven to seek a refuge for his self-love from the painful contrast suggested by so much virtue. On the whole then, we conclude that personal discussion, even in this honied phase, is not very advantageous to the main end of conversation, as a sweetener of the soul and a cultivator of the social affections.

Egotism may be reckoned a kindred vice of conversation, equally tiresome, but not so bad in itself, because it is truer. Egotism is either the pouring forth of a vanity too egregious to be politic; or the effort of a desire to please to bring up its claims to notice; or the mere morbid and painful action of an unhealthy mind, attempting to share its troubles and vexations with others, or to enforce the attention which such minds are apt to think wrongfully withheld. In either of these cases, tediousness is its worst effect. We fly an egotist, but we do not fear or hate him. If vanity prompt his fault, we smile secretly at the weakness; if a desire to make an impression, we revenge ourselves on his tiresomeness by contrasting in our own minds his real with his imaginary claims. It is of such as he that the common people say 'I would like to buy him at my price and sell him at his own,' and the saying arose from the frequency of the appearance of such characters in society. Our daily intercourse must be select indeed if it include not more than one unwise talker of this class. The ardor of our social competition brings them forth in Egyptian abundance, but as their numbers increase their object is more and more difficult of attainment; since society is forced to invent expedients for avoiding them or cutting them short, while its appreciation of their claims is in inverse proportion to the pertinacity

with which they are urged. Not that this form of egotism is always so obvious as to be offensive to the casual observer. It has a thousand degrees and disguises; and in its more subtle and less suspected shape, enters more or less into conversation generally. One cannot analyze one's own talk very faithfully without perceiving traces of this tendency to self-recommendation. In that case we console ourselves by thinking either that we desire to be valued, in order that we may be in a position to do good to others, or that we seek merely to do ourselves justice in the eyes of those whose discernment is not keen enough to form a correct opinion of us for themselves; or at least that to love to be loved is at any rate no very reprehensible source of action. Let us have candor and kindliness enough to make the same apologies for other people.

A still less agreeable class of talkers are they who seem to listen for no other purpose than to entrap the speaker. They lie in wait for petty errors and apparent discrepancies; things whose consistency might be vindicated after a world of words, but which we have a right to expect will be taken for granted as correct by those who know us to have a regard for truth. These are minute and matter-of-fact people, in whose minds the main idea is of no more importance than the most insignificant accessory. They would stop you in the midst of a recital of harrowing interest to say, 'But I thought you said it was *four* o'clock!' and if you should not stop and explain that although one portion of the occurrence took place at four o'clock, another was necessarily deferred until half-past four, would secretly result in the conviction that you were a person who allowed the imagination full play at the expense of truth, or perhaps set you down an absolute story-steller. To talk with such people is subjecting one's self to the labor of proving a continual negative. This caviling habit is completly contradictory of the genial and confiding

spirit which is the life of conversation. It is insulting to the speaker, whose flow of talk returns indignantly upon himself, to await listeners who are too conscious of their own love of truth lightly to suspect another of disregarding it. It is found generally either among persons whose pursuits have led them into close investigation of minute points; among hard and coarse business men or sharp lawyers; among the self-righteous of either sex; among people who being devoid of imagination, are habitually suspicious of those who appear to possess any; and, finally, among those who, having very little regard for truth, seek to bolster up a tottering reputation in this respect by unusual keenness in sifting the words of others. These last have naturally the advantage of all the rest, since there is no pocket so hard to pick as a pickpocket's.

With these enemies of conversation we may rank such as frown upon every little playful sally, snapping at each unconsidered word, and pretending to be puzzled by every witticism, in the spirit of him who asked, of a poem, 'What does it prove? The truth is, folly is almost as requisite to pleasant general conversation as wisdom. Highly condensed aliment is healthful neither for mind nor body. As a little bran left in our bread makes it more wholesome, so does a little harmless folly in our talk. Those who despise it are very apt to suffer and look glum under a mental dyspepsia, and they deserve it. Until philosophers become predominant in society, wisdom will not be best commended to popularity by showing it as the antagonist of mirth; and when they are so, they will show how cheerful wise men can be. Were our laughing muscles given us for nothing? When Solomon compared the laughter of fools to 'the crackling of thorns under a pot,' he was thinking of wicked fools, undoubtedly; there are many such, and their laughter is anything but cheerful. But some gloomy people say, 'There is too much

sin and sorrow in the world for Christian people to be anything but sad.' To this we would assent with all our hearts, if habitual sadness were in itself likely to better the state of things. It is true that, by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better, viz., that unmingled prosperity and happiness is apt to make our poor humanity cold and unfeeling, leaving dormant those tender sympathies with all human woe, which any heart-touching sorrow is sure to awaken; but if this be construed into a disparagement of innocent mirth at proper times, we must rebut it by another proverb of the same teacher of wisdom—'A merry heart is a continual feast,' a feast, we venture to add, quite as much to those about it as to itself. We have no patience with those who despise mirth as mirth; who fix a cold glance upon the vivacious talker of pleasant nothings, as who should say, 'Behold a zany!' One might almost be tempted to remind these unhappy wise men that the most immovably grave of all creatures is the ass. The best wisdom is humane and humble, not stilted and self-glorifying. We would not recommend to a man of sense to be 'the fiddle of the company,' but there is at least equal and less amiable folly in gathering one's self up solicitously, lest any one in the melée of conversation should tread upon the corns of our dignity. Wisdom that is rich and ample can afford some derogation.

The French have furnished us—in return for the words Home, Comfort, and others expressive of simple, tender, and healthy ideas —with several words whose origin refers rather to the genius or spirit of their own social life. Among these are Badinage and Persiflage; the former meaning simply light, frivolous talk, the latter as much and more, viz: the trick of making another say that which renders himself ridiculous. From the former is derived our word Banter, which Dr. Johnson calls 'a barbarous word, without ety-

mology,' unless it be so derived. Our word Raillery is defined as 'satirical merriment,' and To Rally, as 'to treat with slight contempt.'

There is not one of these words which, closely defined, conveys an agreeable idea; yet they are the only words by which to express a certain style of conversation which seems to find favor with some people. It is sometimes called 'sharp shooting'—perhaps because it occasions wincing, if not wounds; sometimes 'sparring,' a term which smacks of the noble science of which Hyer and Sullivan are the prominent professors just now. 'Sparring for love,' however, requires the gloves, but this is apt to be forgotten in conversational pugilistics.

We have sometimes wished we could discover—perhaps by some Asmodean power of peering into the recesses of people's minds—how large a proportion of the world really relish this amusement. We speak not of those who have the advantage in the contest, for they seem to enjoy it; but of the far greater class—those who simply suffer it, or who are induced to retort, in self-defence. There is seldom an equal match on these occasions; and when it does happen, the game is up directly—showing pretty plainly what is at least one of the elements of the pleasure it gives.

To express an opinion counter to this tone of conversation, is to subject one's self to a charge of moroseness, touchiness, or want of sympathy, so nearly has a habit of joking come to be confounded with cheerfulness and good humor. This suppositious character it owes to the fact that nobody likes to own he is hit; and thus pride prevents the party who secretly feels personal joking to be any thing but pleasant, from seeming to disapprove it. The victor, flushed with his little triumph, is quite sure of his own good humor, and so the thing goes on, unchallenged.

We must not omit to say that it is the *habit* of jesting, rather

than the thing itself, that appears to us questionable on various accounts. Conversation would lose as much, if an occasional joke were made contraband, as it does by the ceaseless effort at sharp-shooting which sometimes spoils it. As well paralyze the laughing muscles at once, as forbid all use of them not justifiable by sober argument. On the other hand, as nothing makes a man seem so much like a fool as to be always laughing, so nothing takes away so completely the zest of all jokes as a continual or sustained fire of them. In truth, a hearty relish for pleasantry is the very ground for a remonstrance against being crammed with it.

Equally does the power of enjoying wit find itself aggrieved by the amount of failures involved in a multitude of attempts. Where the desire of saying what are called "good" things is become chronic, these failures are usually at least as ten to one, while the tolerable hits are in general of a grade no higher than punning, or word-catching. Even in that line they are mostly inferior to the manufactured jokes of the Sunday papers, and far below the smart things in Burton's play-bills. "*Rien ne fait dire—rien ne fait faire, autant de sottises, que le desir de montrer de l'esprit,*" says the Abbé Du Bois. While an occasional scintillation, or, what is better, a subdued infusion of wit, enlivens the social circle, gives life to the heaviest subject, or may turn the edge of the most impracticable temper, the sole effect of habitual joking, even putting aside the personality into which it almost always runs, is to lower the tone of conversation, and to throw away every advantage which belongs to cultivation, taste, information, and judgment.

So completely is the ordinary play of this kind of smartness independent of all cultivation and mental resources, that it seems strange it can possess any fascination for superior people. Yet men love contest, even where they are sure to come off losers—in cases

where victory is as bad as defeat; and the keen sportsman will wade through mud and mire in pursuit of game so small that his shot will blow it to atoms.

Thus far we have spoken of raillery as a matter of taste; we must go a little farther.

Raillery implies personality, of course, and as such is certainly contrary to the canons of good society. But the canons of good society are intended as a substitute for the exercise of Christian love. We may ask, then, in pursuance of the subject under a more serious aspect, whether the habit of exercising our wit at the expense of others does not imply, when severely tested, a certain hardness, and lack of that tender sympathy which pervades a heart penetrated and subdued by religion? Religion, it is true, asks no mawkish insipidity of talk, in which wit shall be forbidden, and humor disallowed, and folly unsatirized, and wrong undenounced. But it does demand the greatest and the minutest attention to the law of love; a resolute forbearance of aught that can give an unnecessary pang, or even uneasiness, to any human creature. The old saying "He would rather lose his friend than his jest," recognizes the wounding power of raillery. It is true that "one ought to be able to take a joke," but it is equally true that the responsibility of the case rests with the joker. It would perhaps be too severe to apply here the text which has sometimes been brought to our mind by things which we have heard said in conversation—"The fool scattereth about firebrands, arrows and death, and saith, am I not in sport?" but since we know not where our neighbor's quivering nerve may lie—and still more if we do know—how shall we clear ourselves of the imputation of unfeeling vanity, if we exercise our wit at his cost? Besides, as jests are notoriously used to cover up reproofs, how can any one be expected to know whether the "true word" lie at the bottom or not?

This reminds us that some persons justify raillery on the ground that one can say things in jest that it would not do to say in earnest, so that one may wield a moral engine with the air of play. It cannot be denied that truths sometimes flash upon us amid the keen glancings of our friend's wit, but is it commended to us, under such circumstances? We may use it, but are we made better by it? The qualities which fit a man for telling unwelcome truths are, first, a deep sense of duty, secondly, the truest love and sympathy, and thirdly, the tender and watchful delicacy which these inspire. When we feel disposed to tell a friend trying truths without these preparatives, we may be pretty sure that we are not in a condition to do him good. How many a friendship is cooled, how many an enmity nourished, by mistakes on this point, none but the Searcher of hearts can know, for pride forbids all confession of this description of wounds.

The simple truth, too—that precious jewel of all conversation—is often the sacrifice of this keen encounter of wits. Many an apology, many a retraction, testifies to this. Rather than miss the opportunity of the sharp repartee, we go on to say what we never thought, and, induced by pride, maintain the wrong, till we surprise others into expressions equally unjustifiable. Truth is hard to manage, after we are once fairly within the gale of raillery.

We are far from believing that a shade of malicious intention belongs to badinage, as ordinarily practised. It suggests itself as the most innocent thing in the world, and only shows its real nature in certain emergencies. Children often play at tapping one another—love-taps, we call them—in great good humor, which lasts until one unlucky tap smarts a little. The return to this is a little harder, and—every parent can finish the story. This is precisely the course with half the raillery of conversation. It begins in sport and ends in

earnest, and the observer sometimes suffers quite as much uneasiness as the worsted party. This as sport is about as rational and pleasant as it would be to play at pulling hair—beginning with single hairs, producing rather an agreeable titillation—and ending in whole handfulls.

Those who insist that to proscribe raillery is to legislate against fun betray a sad paucity of resource. Surely the wide range of subjects of harmless drollery will suffice, without calling in the aid of personality. Even if satire be essential, folly is multiform; anomalies—laughable blunders, matter of every day observation. But above all, there is the boundless field of literary allusion, to give elegance to wit and delicacy to satire. Conversation need never resort to bitterness for the sake of piquancy, while such materials exist that only the unfurnished mind can lack opportunity to be innocently brilliant. Indeed a recourse to what is not innocent is a confession of poverty.

When we consider the immense usefulness, as well as the inexhaustible pleasure of conversation, perhaps the most serious objection to a habit of badinage lies in its tendency to lower the conversational tone and to deprive our talk of any possibility of seriousness. Who has not felt the vexation of an interloping joke, which sent all solid and sweet thoughts flying at once, and substituted in their place a forced brood of puns, literally "tedious as a twice-told tale,' since a new one has hardly been heard since Hook's and Hood's days! Shakspeare knew the feeling right well, and expresed it roundly—'Answer not to me with a fool-born jest!' though, like other sinners, he knew the right in this respect better than he did it. Who has courage to attempt the starting of a serious thought after a *feu d'artifice* of popping wit? or if one had courage, who has the power? Tone is everything in conversation;

what right has any one to fix this, and overpower all choice in others?

There is talk which sweetens the soul; there are conversations which leave an odor in the memory as if an angel had been there. Truths are elicited in the free and quiet interchange of thought, which we would not part with for all the small wit ever struck out of mercurial brains. The pleasure of conversation is one which belongs to all circumstances, and lasts when all other pleasures have lost their zest. It seems to us a thing too sacred to be wantonly spoiled. Nobody loves 'foolish talking and jesting' when his heart is in its best state; the *badin*—the *persifleur*, who puts snuff into our dish of chat, or sets all our moral teeth on edge with his saw-filing smartness, is the last man to relish such things when he himself is in another humor. He takes the liberty of breaking the chain of your ideas, but he allows you no corresponding license. He is both ways imperious.

Touchy people are to be dreaded in conversation. Their propensity is to find out, in the discourse of those about them, points of offence wholly impalpable to all but themselves, by a power like that of the magnet, which will cover itself with particles of steel where no other affinity could detect their presence. Woe to the good-natured, unsuspicious sayer of nothings, in such company! It will be hard to convince him that terrible insinuations have been discovered by unwrapping his gentlest meanings. Does he speak of somebody's kindness to the poor? Mrs. Sensitive is suddenly beclouded, for she remembers (what he does not) that she has just been inveighing against indiscriminate charity. Does he wish for rain? It is because he knows Mrs. Sensitive is depending upon fair weather for a party of pleasure. Does he express indignation at some instance of dishonesty? Why need he go out of his way

to bring to mind the defalcation of Mrs. Sensitive's cousin twenty years ago? If he venture upon any subject of interest, he is sure to touch upon a tender spot; if he carefully adhere to generalities, he is reserving his better things until he has more agreeable society. It is astonishing to hear with what bitterness some people will dwell upon these constructive offences—crimes made by the law as it were. A disposition of this sort is a fatal bar to the flow of conversation. Our ordinary ideas will not endure such sifting and weighing. By the time we have turned a thought round and round, to be sure that it has no ridge or corner of offence, whatever point it had is sure to have been worn off. We must leave the touchy person out of our select conversational circle, and we do it with the less regret, because he is almost sure to be found deficient in other requisites for companionship besides good-humor. Intelligence, cultivation, and acquaintance with society are sure antidotes of touchiness, which is only one phase of egotism.

An overbearing manner is hard to describe, yet it is one of the most intolerable in society, and so common a one that we learn almost to dread meeting a person of any pretension, until we have ascertained whether he is in the habit of allowing anybody to have an opinion besides himself—that is to say, whether he is a quack or a *savant*, for thoroughness is always modest. Overbearing people are often unobserving enough to be gratified at the silence in which, after a few efforts, we listen to their conversation; but if vanity and insolence did not blind them, they would perceive that the fool who walks through a garden, cutting off flowers with a switch, that were far better applied to his own shoulders, has exactly the same reason to be proud. Conscious merit will not condescend to struggle against this species of arrogance; it rather waits quietly until the nuisance be overpast.

Your incessant talker is a migratory headache, possessing few claims to our regard, unless it be as the discoverer of perpetual motion. There is somewhere in his mind an invisible and endless thread, about which all sorts of subjects crystalize—facts, theories, opinions; sentiments, prognostics, and fancies—without the slightest arrangement that the hearer can discover; yet, possessing as a whole so wonderful a continuity, that although it might break in any given spot just as well as in any other, it is impossible to break it anywhere without force. Sometimes the thread may be loaded only with "an infinite deal of nothing," but we often find it rich with gems of all hues, but so ill-assorted, so tastelessly huddled together, and so rapidly flashed before our eyes, that we have no leisure to admire or discriminate, and experience fatigue instead of delight. These are the most provoking talkers in the world. They make us hate what we love, and run away from what ought to delight us. The intellect might bear the flood, but the nerves sink under it. The incessant talker is in fact a mere talking machine, for if he had the tact, and sympathy, and spiritual discernment that belongs to enlightened humanity, he could not but perceive the weariness of his hearers. And his foible is not usually nothing more than an incontinence of words; it is more frequently an effect of self-conceit. He has a secret opinion, not only that he has matter of more interest to communicate, but that he can impart it better than anybody else, and he never suspects why his audience drop away as fast as they can. The more we love conversation, the sooner we tire of an unmerciful talker; for he would substitute monologue, dramatic—it may be, or instructive, but still monologue—for the free exchange of thought.

These remarks apply only to the *habitual* talker—him who talks only for his own pleasure, and not that of the company. There

are people—though we do not often meet with them—in whose presence we are involuntarily hushed, because we fear to lose a word. These are not the men to overwhelm us unawares. The flood gates of their minds ask some trouble in lifting, but fall back easily into their place. Their discourse is only a better kind of conversation, suggesting in the listeners' minds thoughts that bud, blossom, and bear fruit in silence; thoughts for which our common words would be but lumbering vehicles. The vanity must be resistless indeed that finds such listening tiresome.

Blessing and bane are so closely coupled in all matters pertaining to the good things of life, that we need not wonder that many ills flow out of every abuse of the great gift of speech. Talk is spontaneous as breathing, as we have said, but it is far from being always as inoffensive. White-handed Brinvilliers poisoned a few people who were soon out of their misery, and she has been for ages held up to execration. Have we never seen a woman who has poisoned twice as many, for life and death, and who yet passes for a good sort of person? 'apt to speak her mind, but meaning no harm,'—with so little appearance of premeditation or evil intent do her cruellest stabs come. She does but report what she has heard—or she had it from good authority—or she did not say more than other said! In the course of a morning visit she will skewer you a whole street of her 'friends' like a lunch of kibaubs, and all peppered for the most fastidious palate. And it must not be thought that women are the only sinners in this regard. There are men, too, who, without the excuse of vacuity or idleness, take a dreadful pleasure in stripping from their compeers the garb in which they appear to the world, and this under a pretence of love of truth and justice! These disinterested champions of truth and justice are the last men to lay bare their own conscious secret faults to the public

eye for the public good. Let us pray that the thing upon which we value ourselves most may never be mentioned in their hearing! Be it wit or wealth, beauty or good humor, humanity, steadfastness, sincerity, or delicacy; pre-eminence in fashion or in learning, success in literature, patience in sorrow, honest effort in adversity, or what not—though it be the immediate jewel of our souls, no card-house was ever demolished with greater coolness than will this favorite wing or turret of our character be by the cool breath of the habitual detractor. He 'speaks daggers, and every word stabs.'

But our present purpose is to deal rather with the æsthetics of this subject. To treat adequately the morals of conversation would require more space than we can give to the present paper. Its importance as a moral engine can hardly be overrated, while it may be, and too often is, a caterer for the seven deadly sins. Let those who are disposed to think conversation a matter of indifference, go carefully through the Book of Proverbs alone, and see what place the wise king assigns to it among the elements of social life, morals, and religion. Good words, evil words, many words, few words, words of cheer, of contention, of anger, of boasting, of deceit, of impiety—these form almost the burden of his song. 'A wholesome tongue is a tree of life!' What language can be stronger? What more encouraging to boldness of speech in the cause of goodness? And the denunciations of those who dare profane the sacred gift are equally powerful.

Among the minor morals of conversation we must not omit to notice that much talking in mixed company is seldom safe. We mean that excited strain of talking in which some people indulge, without much reflection or any decided intention for good or ill. The judgment is too often asleep at such times; we say things under excitement which we would gladly disclaim afterwards,

but through shame of inconsistency; for excitement gives things an aspect foreign to reality, and while we are under its influence, we are very liable to be mistaken in our company, and so commit imprudences for which we suffer more severely than we deserve. Vanity, too, takes advantage of these overflowing moments to make us ridiculous. Mankind must become kinder and more candidly indulgent before it will be safe to talk much in mixed company, where humors and biases differ as much as complexions.

Idle people will hardly ever be found to converse tolerably. They have no 'hived honey of the soul' to bring out for the common good. Give us rather 'men of one idea,' though we confess them to be often tiresome. They at least say *something*, which idlers seldom do. Earnestness may not always be graceful, but it is inspiring. Putting aside all charlatanry, the man whose whole soul is in his subject will interest if he cannot convince us. Faith is more potent than *savoir faire*. In conversation as in the pulpit, the man who softly utters sleek and perfumed nothings would be gladly exchanged, by all healthy-minded listeners, for a backwoodsman without a coat, who has something to say and says it boldly. Jemmy Jessamys are out of fashion, in every department.

How rich is the discourse of those who, after having taken an active share in life, are inspired by sympathy and love to give forth the result of store and fusion! We linger over their words as over precious wine, or as before the gorgeous pomp of sunset, when though masses of cloud be gathering, they have a given glory from above, all the grander for the coming darkness. How we thank them in our inmost souls for their wisdom, which we feel to have been gathered 'through much tribulation.' They have lived for us, not for themselves; they are giving us gratuitously what cost them—life! We do well to prize their great and good words,—heart-

drops they are if rightly valued; to carry our children to hear them, that they may learn to aspire to old age and not dread it. The extinguished torch in the hand of weeping love is indeed fitting emblem for the tombs of such!

Travellers *may* be good talkers, if they have carried with them or brought home a genial philosophy, and tact enough to know when particulars become tedious. But the satires called forth by travelled parrots—

> The proud, conceited, talking spark
> Returning from his finished tour,
> Grown ten times perter than before,

as the old fable has it, have almost silenced travellers of every degree. It is a point of pride, now, for those who have landed on every shore and weathered every climate, to be conspicuously taciturn: 'nobody's a bit the wiser' for all their journeyings. This is a sort of fraud, doubtless. We have a right to expect that those who have seen what we shall never see will give us of their abundance, without asking pride's leave on all occasions. Unfortunately the knowledge of human nature acquired in travel leads us to be very careful how we seem to fancy we can instruct, or even that we possess any peculiar material for conversation. In order to talk agreeably, it is necessary first that we should acquire knowledge, secondly, that we should carefully conceal it—*i. e.*, give only the *results* of it. There must be economy in the dispensation of our best things.

A habit of studying character and of classifying the specimens we encounter, affords a good foundation for conversation. It is on this account that clergymen are generally good talkers, perhaps in general the best, at least in this country. They have commonly a

certain tranquillity of manner, which is, in our judgment, one of the essentials of an agreeable style of conversation; they pass a good deal of time in private study, and are usually conversant with literary subjects to a certain extent; their professional avocations lead their thoughts among high things; and still more, as we have said, the necessity for studying human life and character, fits them in a peculiar degree for the quiet exercise of those faculties which must act freely when we talk well. There must be patience for pauses as well as fervor in speech; self-control under opposition as well as earnestness in advocacy; indulgence for ignorance, indulgence even for stolidity. And in this enumeration we are still adhering to the æsthetics of the subject, for mere good breeding requires all these. The best discourse (as to substance) is nullified or worse, if all that goes to make up that undefinable, comprehensive, lovely, indefinite word, good-humor, be not present.

The mention of a knowledge of human nature, as a requisite for conversational power, might suggest the fitness of the law as a school for talkers, but the very accuracy which ought to be an advantage, is sometimes found inconvenient. The off-hand expression of sentiment must necessarily be partial and imperfect. What we say on the spur of the moment must be received in the spirit rather than in the letter, and a habit of cross-examining or sifting, of special pleading, or even of sarcastic comment, is anything but favorable to the tone of equal conversation. Freedom of expression, without which conversation becomes unworthy of its name, soon leads to recrimination, unless a generous toleration give it room and kindly atmosphere. Opposition gives life, for there is something in perpetual assent that soon wearies us; yet the spirit arising from the support of opposing sentiments must not betray us into acridity or personality, as it is too apt to do. If our arrows be feathered

with wit they must be tipped with love, or at least benevolence. If argument grow strenuous it must all the more be guarded against venom, or we offend against all the social amenities.

Our appreciation of the pleasure of conversation is so high; it forms so important an item in our list of the most desirable pleasures of life; we are so impressed with its momentous value as a moral engine, and so grieved to see it profaned every day by emptiness, ignorance, and ill-nature, that we could find it in our hearts to bestow all our tediousness upon our readers on this theme. But if we should say much more, we should be transgressing one of our own rules of talk, viz., that patience for pauses is as necessary as fervor of speech.

# WHAT SHALL WE BE?

It has been said, even by some of our friends, that we, as a nation, have no manners of our own; and again, that the manners of the roughest among our western settlers are the only natural and simply expressive ones as yet developed among us. Those who would disparage us and our republican theory and practice, insist that these rough, negligent, uncivil manners are the proper growth of our institutions, and must more and more characterize us as a people, except so far as we imitate the over-polished nations of the old world. It is argued that a state of things so fluctuating in the matter of individual wealth—where the continual subdivision of property must forever prevent the social ascendancy of any class which might serve as a reservoir of elegance, and a standard for the general manners—must tend towards a barbarous arrogance, and the lack of those accomplishments and amenities which, in aristocratic countries, being cultivated by the privileged classes who desire to dignify their leisure, serve as an example to those immediately below those classes, and so on, through the descending scale, as an incentive to all.

If we allow that such prognostics are well founded, it must be after conceding that there is no standard of manners less fluctuating than Fashion—that there are no rules of behavior of universal application—that, in short, imitation is our only resort. This is too weak and narrow, nay, too vulgar an idea to be entertained for a moment. What! can we believe that the progress of society—the approach of the human race in knowledge and goodness to the Image in which it was made—is left at the mercy of a few persons—not the wisest or best—who call themselves the World! Has this class ever yet been selected by Providence as the immediate instrument of any of its great designs for the good of the whole? Has it not always rather been a merely tolerated excrescence on the body politic, destined to be gradually absorbed as the great whole advances to perfect health? We cannot grant that this *soi-disant* world is empowered to give laws on any subject more important than the tie of a cravat, the depth of a curtsey, or the dividing line between two shades of the same color, one of which shall be "exquisite," while the other is "horrid." We can allow its judgment in a dispute among milliners, which can make her patient look most unlike nature, or between two mantua-makers, who shall produce the best resemblance to the inhuman figures in a French print of the fashions. If a question arise as to what extent of arrogance in a lady may be lawful, and how far she may go without being considered an encroacher upon others' rights of haughtiness, we are willing the "world" should decide, being the party interested; or if we would know how to crush the young aspiring of some heart heaven-directed toward the living Truth, we shall certainly ask its advice. But in ascertaining the principles on which, if at all, the great human family may be indeed a house of brothers, we must look further and higher for authority. All the maxims of this same

'world' are short sighted and ignoble, content with reference to the single day that is passing, and that only as far as itself is concerned. For the eternal Future and the undistinguished crowd it cares nothing; its timidity and indolence shun the thought of the one, its selfish feebleness cannot afford any recognition of the other.

It is strange that we Americans should bow as we do to any such self-appointed tribunal. The foundations of this great country of ours—of which we are, under certain circumstances, apt to boast a little more than is becoming—were laid in professions of equality and brotherhood, which it required a good deal of philosophy even to adopt, still more to put in honest practice. But we did adopt them, and not by the acclamations of a few demagogues, as so many specious measures are adopted, but by the concurrent impulse of the whole national mind, under the guidance of the wise and good men sent by Heaven to our aid in that fateful moment. We adopted, as a people, sentiments which derive their origin and their sanction from Christianity, and this when we were suffering under the legitimate effects of opposite ones. We had learned, by sad contrast, what precious things were justice and humanity, and fellow-feeling, and we chose them for our watchwords—a choice whose sincerity many a vaunt since that day of trial and enthusiasm has attested.

Our nation, *as* a nation is less satisfied than formerly with the wisdom of the original choice. Far from growing less democratic, we become every year more so. No step backwards is considered possible, even by the most anxious conservative. Every modification of the law tends to a stricter and more literal equality of rights and privileges. It requires all the power of the South, exerted with the energy of a life-struggle, to keep even the blacks in a degraded caste, so all pervasive is the influence of our political creed upon our social practice. For the first time since the creation, is exhibited the spectacle of an equality almost Christian. The servant is as his

master, and in truth is sometimes not a little disposed to change places with him; indeed if it were not for daily importations from monarchial countries, we of the North should have no servants at all. The continual subdivision of property by law, where primogeniture has no privileges, obliges the sons or grandsons of the rich to exert themselves for the acquisition of the means of life, and so puts them at least on a level with the descendants of the poor—generally rather below them in the capacity to acquire, since habits of frugality and self-denial are much more likely to result in competence, than the more indulgent ones which wealth begets.

This state of things has had a marked effect on our character and manners as individuals. We are a good-natured and brotherly people; we like to be closely bound together by ties of family, and neighborhood, business, church, and politics. A man must be very contemptible or odious, if, after he has once been respected or liked among us, any misfortune happening to him is not felt with sympathy by the public; and remedied as far as may be. I do not mean that misfortunes happening to individuals are felt as they ought to be in a community of Christians, who are bound by their allegiance to their Master, to consider the suffering of one member as the suffering of the whole body; but I have often thought that there was more public sympathy and generous aid to the unfortunate here than I had ever heard of or been able to discover any where else. At the West, if a man's house burn down, his neighbors immediately join and build him another; and not content with this, scour the country for forty miles round, if necessary, to stock it with comforts. If a poor woman die and leave helpless little ones, somebody is sure to adopt them and bring them up, not on the cold pittance of a grudging charity, but as sons and daughters. And in spite of the keenness of business-competition, so inimical to some of

the virtues, where is found so warm a mercantile sympathy as in our great commercial cities?

Why then should there be any Americans who desire to return to the hollow and unchristian tone of society which is the inevitable result of unjust and unrighteous social distinctions? As a nation, we have put our hand to the plough and cannot look back if we would; we have chosen a path which our sons and daughters may pursue with firmness and dignity, leading the great procession in whose ranks all mankind are now so anxious to enrol themselves. Wherever we go, we are looked upon as the representatives of the principle of self-government. Our actions and even our manners, are examined as tests both of the soundness of our political maxims, and the sincerity and intelligence with which we adopt them. We cannot persuade any body to consider our national ideas as a separate thing from our national manners. We have voluntarily placed all spurious dignity out of our reach by the most solemn acts of renunciation; making it forever disgraceful in an American citizen to claim for himself any honor which he has not earned. Some foreigner has said that the only aristocracy of the United States was to be found in the families of our revolutionary heroes, civil and military; but the nation ignores even these claims, if the descendant show in his own character no mark of the worthiness of his ancestry. We have absolutely no sinecures, even of fame; every man must earn whatever consideration he enjoys. The richest men the country has ever possessed, have stood exactly where they deserved to stand, in public estimation, their wealth passing for nothing, or worse than nothing, in the account. Our Presidents, after they have fulfilled their term of office as public servants, retire into the ranks of common men, without the least vestige of their kingly power clinging to them, even in the shape of the smallest

provision for their wants, which might place them above the necessity of exertion. If they or their families should claim any peculiar position in society on account of past honors, the whole country would deride their folly and inconsistency. Yet there are not wanting those among us who, with no claim beyond a little wealth—and that too, depending on a mercantile basis, proverbially fleeting,—attempt to imitate on a small scale the aristocratic insolence which they observe in the English; forsake the true and wholesome notions of kindness and consideration for others in which their parents were educated, and practice the coldness, the disregard, the egotism, which have been the natural growth of society in which caste has been recognized for thousands of years.

The true glory of the American character at home or abroad, is simplicity, truth, kindness, and a strict regard to the rights and feelings of others. Whenever the conventional standards of other nations conflict with these, they should be repudiated by us, however fascinating they may seem to our pride. An Englishman may with less blame be self-inclosed, haughty and overbearing. He has not only been taught pride, but he has been taught to be proud of his pride; while if an American be mis-proud, he has but his own perverse littleness of soul to blame. Not only do individual Englishmen and Englishwomen indulge themselves in a lofty and self-forgetful tone, but the oracles of the nation, the very pulpits, encourage the unholy illusion. "Condescension" is preached as a virtue to the rich, "submission" and "deference" to the poor. A late number of the Quarterly Review, in a series of remarks on the subject of governesses, which are intended to be highly humane and generous in their tone, after describing a governess as "a being who is our equal in birth, manners and education, but our inferior in worldly wealth," remarks—"The line which severs a governess from her

employers is not one which will take care of itself, as in the case of a servant. If she sits at table she does not shock you—if she opens her mouth she does not distress you—her appearance and manner are likely to be as good as your own—her education rather better there is nothing upon the face of the thing to stamp her as having been called to a different state of life from that in which it has pleased God to place you, and therefore the distinction has to be kept up by a fictitious barrier." "She is a burden and restraint in society, as all must be who are placed ostensibly at the same table, and yet are forbidden to help themselves or to be helped to the same viands." (!) "She must to all intents and purposes live alone, or she transgresses that invisible but rigid line which alone establishes the distance between herself and her employers." This state of things is so entirely according to the reviewer's view of right, that he adds a protest against being suspected of "a hope, even a wish" to see it remedied. "We must ever keep them in a sort of isolation, for it is the only means for maintaining that distance which the reserve of English manners, and the decorum of English families exact." If these be the teachers what are we to expect of the taught! Can Americans adopt such sentiments and copy such manners without belying their parentage and renouncing the principles which made them what they are? Shall Christian men and women among us be dazzled by English splendor into forgetfulness of the odious and unfeeling worldliness implied in such views of life? The account of wretchedness, insanity and death, which are the portion of a dreadful percentage of English governesses *from this one cause of wounded feeling*, should be read in connection with the reviewer's cool speculations on the subject, in order to obtain a just idea of the dreadful self-forgetfulness into which people may run who prefer the pampering of their pride to the practice of justice and humanity.

And after reading this, every American can draw his own conclusions as to the desirableness of transplanting to our soil this root of bitterness, sin and ruin.

A marked difference between the manners of Englishmen and Americans, is shown in their respective behavior under provocation or injury. An American is at least as quick to feel an intentional insult as another man;—at least as prompt in resenting it as a Christian man may lawfully be. But if a servant misbehave, or if some dispute arise, it will not be natural to him to resort to his fist or his boot; and if he should, in a momentary gust of passion, so far forget himself, he will not boast of the feat afterwards, complacently constituting himself judge, jury, and executioner in his own case, without for a moment suspecting that the question of right and wrong may have had two sides. But for an Englishman to act thus is nothing remarkable, though he will take care that the abused person is in a position to be silenced or bought off with a bribe, which no American could be. The rights of others operate as a complete restraint upon such outbursts of passion with us.

I would not be understood to mean that in England the law is not made to protect the inferior in such cases, or that Englishmen are worse natured than other men. I am speaking of manners, as modified by certain social peculiarities. The injured party may claim redress at the law, but the law, interpreted under the powerful influence of social prejudice, is not a very safe resort for the poor man, who is ruined if he fail to establish his charge; and, practically, the superior in fortune does indulge his temper more freely, from knowing that any ordinary injury can be compensated in money, which could never be the case in the United States.

Female imitation of English aristocratic manners among us, is generally confined to matters of dress, show, equipage and fashions

of seeing company. We do not imitate our neighbors where they are most worthy of imitation—in their solid and elegant cultivation; in their national habit of ample exercise in the open air, or the excellently simple and healthy treatment of children. Our ambition is limited to matters connected with "style," and whatever tends to the establishment of distinctions in society. We go to the French for dress, and to the English for manners—a wise choice if it were necessary to ape any body; how much wiser would be a firm and modest originality; a simplicity founded upon principle; moderation in expense, for the express purpose of being liberal where liberality is honorable; plainness of dress, resulting at once from good taste and from religious self-denial, for the sake of others to whom our flaunting array may be a mortification or a snare; plainness of living, lest our splendor should separate between us and the good to whom God has not seen fit to give riches; a direct truthfulness of speech, as far from the language of unmeaning compliment as from the rudeness which bespeaks want of sympathy. In short, should we not, as a nation, be happier and more respectable, if we carried out, heartily but quietly, in our habits and manners, the grand and simple ideas to which our country owes her position among the nations of the earth?

Can any one believe that we should sink in the world's estimation by living consistently? Are our ambassadors treated with less consideration than those of other powers, when they appear in republican simplicity in the midst of stars and orders? They have the reality of respect, however unwillingly rendered. Franklin appeared at the most splendid court in Europe in his homely woollen hose; was he the man of least consideration there? The notion of republican equality was new then, and this outward plainness was understood to be its proper interpretation; but the power of mind

was never more fully recognized. Europe is attempting to follow us to our own ground—why should we wish to go back to hers? She has long ago reached what we seem to be striving after—the height of luxurious and ungodly living—and proved its unsatisfactory emptiness. When we compete with her here, we place ourselves at disadvantage; for we cannot equal her, in centuries of effort. Artificial manners were in her the natural growth of a thousand circumstances; in us they are contrary to the natural course of things, and a mere aping of what dazzles us. Would we might rather fall in love with truth and heartiness!

The impossibility of equalling an old and highly refined nation in the realities of splendor, is a reason which should operate on our pride, at least. We may purchase a fac simile of the furniture and equipage of an English Duke; we may buy his cook and give his dinners; or we may provide scenery, dresses and decorations for his duchess's *soirée* or reception—but what have we done towards reflecting the style of his household? Where is the high breeding, the self-poise, the at-home air, among these things? If we would make a dinner party the expense of which should vie with the City feast at a coronation, where shall we find the company? Among worthy merchants and lawyers, or members of congress, or judges? Have not some of our greatest men—I may say all our greatest men—been of the simplest tastes and habits? Where can we find a man whose conversation would be of the least value, who would not prefer visiting where style was a secondary matter? And surely a splendid feast without elegant conversation is a mortifying sight. Even in England, where splendor is inbred, every body groans over a grand dinner; in America the burthen is intolerable, both to entertainers and sufferers.

Do not let us adopt any artificial and un-American customs with

the desire to imitate, or the hope to rival, our English neighbors. Our imitation will be crude and vapid; our rivalry ridiculous. They could much more profitably imitate us in the simplicity which we despise, and not a few of their best spirits desire to see some approach to such a state of things, in the hope of averting the ills which threaten their prosperity and grandeur. They feel that their safety lies in lessening the gulf which lies between the privileged classes and "the people." Now we are "the people," and we cannot be any body else. To attempt it were as vain as for a soldier to step out of the ranks in order to appear to better advantage. With us, the good of one is the good of all. We have a grand position as independent Americans; we sink at once into an inferior one, when we imitate any body. The whole range of cultivation lies before us; we can inform and refine our minds to any extent, and spend our fortunes according to the tastes thus imbibed. We may live liberally and even elegantly, without renouncing the dignified simplicity which draws its maxims and habits from the proprieties of things, and not from the conventionalisms of people in the Old World; we may become the patrons of Art, because we love and understand it, not because somebody else with money patronizes Art, and we do not like to be behindhand; we may exercise hospitality in the true spirit—that which excludes the idea of emulation, and thinks only of social pleasure and kindness. And we can do all this without even inquiring what will English or French Mrs. Grundy say, or hampering ourselves with a set of rules and notions, which, whatever may have been their propriety where they grew up, are to us the very killers of healthy enjoyment, enemies of the poetry of life. The tameness which is the result of imitation is dreadful. Whoever among us speaks his honest sentiments always acknowledges that our tone of society is dull and uninteresting; and this is

partly owing to the incessant pursuit of money; partly to a disregard of æsthetic cultivation; but principally to a want of naturalness—a spirit of imitation, which prompts us to be always in the rear of some model, without the least judgment or taste. We lack individuality; and although the English possess it in a large measure,—as from their great self-esteem they might be expected to do—yet we can never acquire it by copying their manners.

Let us inquire for a moment what were the seeds of the fashionable manners we are so fond of imitating—those which we please ourselves with calling aristocratic. Mr. D'Israeli says of the days of King James I.—'As a historian, it would be my duty to show how incredibly gross were the domestic language and the domestic familiarities of kings, queens, lords and ladies, which were much like the lowest of our populace.' Sir John Harrington gives an account of 'a masque given during the visit of the king of Denmark in England, at which the ladies who were to have performed could not stand from intoxication, and their Majesties of Denmark and England, were both carried to bed by their attendants.' The ladies of the court of Charles I., drank, gamed and swore; enacted jokes of which often the wit was as questionable as the propriety; rode in the park; sailed on the Thames; visited the theatres in men's attire; frequented masquerades, etc.' What was fashionable for gentlemen, we learn from Ben Jonson; 'Look you, sir, now you are a gentleman, you must carry a more exalted presence; change your mood and habit to a more austere form; be exceeding proud, stand upon your gentility, and scorn every man.' 'The fashion is, when any stranger comes in amongst them, they all stand up and stare at him, as if he were some unknown beast, brought out of Africk. You must be impudent enough, sit down, and use no respect; when any thing is propounded above your capacity, smile

at it, make two or three faces at it, and it is excellent; though you argue a whole day in silence thus, and discourse nothing but laughter, 'twill pass. Only, now and then give fire, discharge a good full oath, and offer a great wager, and 'twill be admirable.' Lady Townley enumerates among the delightful privileges of a married woman of fashion, that she may 'have men at her toilet, invite them to dinner, appoint them a party in a stage-box at a play, engross the conversation there, call 'em by their Christian names, talk louder than the players, etc.' In later times, the Princess of Wales, mother of George III., said, that 'such was the universal profligacy, such the character and conduct of the young people of distinction, that she was really afraid to have them near her children.'

It is to be observed that, while the character of the 'fashionable world,' was thus unprincipled and degraded, examples of the highest virtue were not wanting, elsewhere, in close proximity to these beacons of folly and vice. Each age shows us splendid examples, in both sexes, but they do not belong to the class which exalts fashion into an aim of life. It requires no unjust severity to say, that in that class there are no such examples. Why—if the pattern of virtue be not lost—if it inspire compatriots and contemporaries—why is one particular class beyond the reach of its influence, so completely that by no accident is any one of its members ever found eminent in the ranks of goodness? The question needs no answer, but we may ask what worthy reason there can be for our ambition to belong to a body thus inferior in aims and deficient in moral power.

We might fill out these hints, and bring down a succession of pictures even to the present day, but there is no occasion. Public sentiment has made such advances that open grossness is not tolerated in our day, in any rank of society. But the spirit of what is

called fashionable life is the same; its foundation is the same in the most important particular, viz: in maintaining that the whims and foolish devices of a few idle wealthy people shall be the standard of manners and customs—a principle which casts discredit upon all that men have agreed in considering wise and good, even where it does not lead to an open abrogation of the essentials of morality. This is the true vice of Fashion—not that it is frivolous—not that it sacrifices too much to mere beauty, or mere pleasure—not that it leads to imprudent or even dishonest expenditure; but that it virtually sets aside the ancient and only standards of right, in favor of a code of laws as weak and mean as they are fluctuating.

It is a wonder that any considerable class of persons has ever been found willing to become the humble imitators of mere folly and arrogance; a still greater wonder that such a class should exist among us. Let us hope that a better understanding of ourselves and our position will bring us back, at no very distant day, to a more sagacious estimate of *ton*. Our *ton* should be that of true and honorable simplicity—the simplicity, not of ignorance, but of principle—the *ton* of kindliness and universal consideration, of intelligence, of industry, of respect for probity and delicacy, in whatever station found.

It is the apparent refinement of fashionable people that tempts many, who do not perceive that an appearance of refinement often covers real coarseness. Refinement of soul is one thing; mere outward delicacy quite another; but the young, the thoughtless and the feeble-minded are apt to overlook the distinction. True delicacy is often found in the humblest ranks of life, horrible coarseness in the highest. Let us learn to judge of things as they are, disregarding all false glare.

Here, as in all other cases, we find in the Bible, a rule suited to our needs: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsover things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and any praise, think on these things." Is this the groundwork of the fashionable code?

THE TOILET.

## FASTIDIOUSNESS.

Who, that is not a botanist, likes to see one of that disenchanting and unpoetical craft coolly pull into fragments—cut, maim, and disfigure—discolor with pitiless acids and virulent alkalies, and macerate to undistinguishable pulp—his favorite flower? Who can bear to see petals pinched—anthers analyzed—pericarps pried into—roots rummaged—by a utilitarian? How much pleasanter is it to find sacred emblems in a certain peculiar arrangement of stamens and pistils; read constancy of affection in

> The sunflower that turns on her god when he sets
> The same look that she turned when he rose—

and listen with believing ears to

> Hyacinths, purple and white and blue,
> That fling from their bells a sweet peal anew,
> Of music so delicate, soft and intense,
> It is felt like an odor within the sense!

Delicate things should be treated delicately; the golden beauty of pollen is lost in the handling. It is one of the cherished evi-

dences of ultra refinement to hold many things too nice to be touched, and this thought brings us to our subject.

The fastidious are of right shocked at any examination into the nature and essence of fastidiousness. They would be ready to forswear it after its humiliating subjection to vulgar tests, if there were anything else that could so well distinguish the ineffable few from the intolerable many. It is their own—their chosen—their resource—their defence—their hope—their glory;—to question with or upon it is insolently coarse; to doubt its rightful supremacy, profane. We remember reading somewhere of a simple rural lover who had followed some Lady Clara Vere de Vere to town, there to behold her waltzed and polka'd with by all manner of men, returning to his shades in despairing disgust:

> Sir, she's yours! you have brushed from the grape its soft blue,
> From the rose-bud you've shaken the tremulous dew—
> What you've touched you may take!—

We have some fear that fastidiousness will be even so—contemptuously left to the critics, if they once try their art upon it. But we claim the privilege of science, which dissects without respect to persons, and does not blush to be the sworn enemy of poetry.

To begin botanically then: Where shall we class this flower of worldliness—among the roots of healing or the subtle poisons?

Shall it take rank with the favored Camellia in the bouquet of beauty, or with

> Thistles and nettles and darnels rank,
> And the dock and the henbane and hemlock dank—
> Prickly and pulpous and blistering and blue,
> Livid, and starr'd with a lurid hue?

It is hard to characterize it, for it is full of anomalies; sometimes

splendid and deadly, like the scarlet Lobelia, sometimes intoxicating and delusive as Hellebore, and again harmless and insipid as some 'weed inane.' But let us not be led by these spiral figuratives to a height of metaphor from which it may be difficult to slip down gracefully.

In the plainest prose, then, what is fastidiousness?

Stern old Johnson, who confessed that it was difficult for him to pity the choice sorrows of a fine lady, says, to be fastidious is to be 'insolently nice—delicate to a vice—squeamish—disdainful.' Do these seem amiable adjectives? Impertinent dictionary-maker! Unaccommodating, obdurate, Saxon tongue! Is there no unique name for that fine essence—that impalpable *sina qua non*—which is the life and soul of the genteel? No! none but itself can be its parallel. Let us then not seek to define but to examine it.

Personal fastidiousness is said to be the characteristic of a condition of high refinement. If refinement were a matter of physics, this might be admitted. The Israelitish ladies 'could not set the sole of their foot to the ground for delicateness and tenderness,' but were they, therefore, refined women? There is an implication even of impiety in the scriptural notice of them. Poppæa must have a bath of asses' milk; somebody of old wept because a rose-leaf was doubled under him. Not to go beyond our own day and sphere for instances, we have ourselves known a gentleman who would not sign his name until he had put on his gloves, lest by any accident his fingers should incur the contamination of ink; and a lady who objected to joining in the Holy Communion, because the idea of drinking after other people was so disgusting! Shall we then reckon among the marks of true refinement a quality which is compatible with ignorance, with vice, with inanity, vanity, and irreligion?

Hans Christian Andersen has given us one of his shrewd little stories in point.

There was once a prince of great honor and renown who wished to marry a real princess. Many persons calling themselves princesses had been offered for this dignity, but there was always something about the ladies which made him doubtful of their claim to the title. So not being able to satisfy his fastidiousness on this point, he remained for a long time undecided.

One night during a tremendous storm, a young lady came to the door and requested admittance, saying that she was a real princess. She was in a most pitiable condition—draggled from head to foot, with the rain pouring in torrents from her dishevelled locks, she looked forlorn enough for a beggar. But the prince would not prejudge her; he invited her to spend the night, and in the meantime his mother devised a plan by which to ascertain whether her pretensions were genuine. On the place where the princess was to sleep she put three small peas, and on the top of them twenty mattresses, covering these again with twenty feather beds. Upon this luxurious couch the supposed princess retired to rest, and in the morning she was asked how she had passed the night.

'Oh, most wretchedly,' she replied; 'there was something hard in my bed which distressed me extremely, and has bruised me all over black and blue!'

Then they knew that her pretensions were not false, for none but a real princess could have possessed sufficient delicacy of perception to feel the three little peas under twenty mattresses and twenty feather beds!

Is not then delicacy of personal habits desirable?

Beyond doubt, when it is held in subservience to higher things. The man or woman to whom coarseness is not offensive, can never

be agreeable as a companion, whatever the general excellence which might be expected to counterbalance this defect of nature or education. But to be naturally or habitually delicate is one thing, to be systematically fastidious quite another. The quality or habit we are considering has its root in the profoundest egotism, and its branches are so numerous that it is impossible to consider them all in detail. It is like the paper-mulberry tree, no two leaves of which are alike. Let us pick a sprig or two here and there as specimens.

Fastidiousness, when unaffected—which it is not always—is very generally a mark of weakness. Persons of exalted virtue are never reputed to be fastidious, and why? not because they are constituted differently from other men, but because great objects—noble aims—occupy the soul and thoughts to the exclusion of whatever might interfere with them. If a man who has devoted himself to the highest pursuits which can engage the attention of mortals, finds fastidious habits in his way, they will be the first sacrifice he will lay upon the altar of duty. But it may be questioned whether these habits will not be often beforehand with us, effectually preventing any hearty devotion to duty. Questioned, did we say? Alas! does not every day's observation show us that they are *the* hindrance, in too many cases, especially of feminine goodness? In the care of the poor, and especially in any attempt to reform the vicious, is not this conspicuously the difficulty, even to the extent of subjecting a woman to the charge of coarseness if she is found able to bear the presence of the squalid and the degraded? We have heard ladies observe calmly and with obvious self-complacency, that they could not endure the very atmosphere of the poor, and must leave the care of them to those who could! And we could not help feeling that the daring required for such an avowal might have served an excellent purpose if turned in the right direction.

Fastidiousness is a dreadful weapon of domestic tyranny. Many a household can tell the grinding power of a selfishness which disguises itself under the form of delicacy of tastes and habits. Many are the tears of vexation, anxiety, mortification, and disappointment, occasioned by the unfeeling temper and inconsiderate exactions which are the legitimate fruit of undue attention to personal comfort. One must be little observant of what is about him if he have not sometimes been driven, by the ingenious requisitions of the self-indulgent, to wish that the hair shirt, the pulse-and-water, and the flinty bed of the anchorite could be tried for the reformation of such. Providence seems often to discipline these people by increasing the sensitiveness they have voluntarily induced or cherished, until it becomes a tormenting want which nothing in nature is capable of allaying. They are crushed by the gods their own hands have set up.

But personal fastidiousness, although a hardener of the heart, a traitor to the rights and feeling of those who depend on us, a bar to improvement, a puller down of all the faculties of the soul, is not the only form of this specious enemy. Its effects upon society are quite as extensive and fatal in its other character of—what we may call for want of a more expressive term—exclusiveness. In this shape its office is to allow value and charm to all that is desirable, only in proportion as others are shut out from its enjoyment. It seems strange that this so obvious refuge of empty pride could become a formidable moral evil, but it is one of the sorest of our condition of society—a condition which, because it is artificial and contrary to our better nature, we please ourselves with calling refined. An anxious reaching after something which shall distinguish us from others is one of the natural traits of mortal man; but one of the most unlovely and ungenerous manifestations of this dis-

position is the attempt to undervalue a large part of all the things and people that we see, in order that our taste and judgment may be reckoned supreme by people as superficial as ourselves. It is this which occasions the listlessness displayed by certain persons when they are out of their own set; the chilling look, the dead reply, the disclaiming air with which they decline to participate in social pleasures which have not a certain conventional sanction. They are *so* fastidious! They lament the fault, too, with an air that says they would not be without it for the world; they evidently feel that their chosen position depends upon an incapacity to enjoy common pleasures, quite ignorant all the while that the highest point and object of true cultivation is a universal human sympathy. The eagle can look down from such a commanding altitude that the difference in height of the objects on the plain is scarcely perceptible; while the mole, blinking about a diameter of a few inches, is quite sure there is nothing worth seeing beyond that circle. What wounds, what heart-burnings, what stiflings of the sweet charities of life, what 'evil surmisings,' what an unchristian tone of intercourse, what loss of a thousand advantages to be communicated and received, result from the cultivation of a spirit of fastidious exclusiveness! How much spontaneous kindness is prevented by the intrusion of a cultivated and cherished distaste for certain harmless peculiarities which we have chosen to consider intolerable! We can pardon criminality in some shapes more easily than we can overlook mere unpleasantness in others, so arbitrary is our fastidiousness, so unamenable to right reason. 'There are far worse sins than sins against taste,' said a young clergyman once to a lady who was inveighing against the coarseness of certain reformers; and the lesson might well be repeated in many a so-called refined circle. One

of the deep condemnations of this effeminate nicety is that it is always exercised about trifles.

Like other things spurious, fastidiousness is often inconsistent with itself; the coarsest things are done, the cruellest things said by the most fastidious people. Horace Walpole was a proverb of epicurean particularity of taste, yet none of the vulgarians whom he vilified had a keener relish for a coarse allusion or a malicious falsehood. Beckford, of Fonthill, demanded that life should be thrice winnowed for his use, but what was his life? Louis XIV. was "insolently nice" in some things, what was he in others? If we observe a person proud of a reputation for fastidiousness, we shall always find that the egotism which is its life will at times lead him to say or do something disgusting. We need expect from such people no delicate, silent self-sacrifice, no tender watching for others' tastes or needs, no graceful yielding up of privileges in unconsidered trifles, on which wait no "flowing thanks." They may be kind and obliging to a certain extent, but when the service required involves anything disagreeable, anything offensive to the taste on which they pride themselves, we must apply elsewhere. Their fineness of nature sifts common duties, selecting for practice only those which will pass the test; and conscience is not hurt, for unsuspected pride has given her a bribe.

One of the fruits of misplaced fastidiousness is the utter and intolerable tameness which it induces in society. We ask for truth and nature in poetry and painting, and find nothing so charming as flashes of natural genius in literature; but in society everything is crushed to a dead level, and by what? By a tyrannical something which claims to be good taste, but which is in truth anything else. This resolute frowning down or freezing up of whatever is spontaneous is not the operation of good taste, but the cunning artifice of

dull people, who, having secured certain physical advantages, use them for the purpose of repressing in others whatever might threaten to disturb their empire. It seems strange at first view that this should have been practicable, and the reason why it is so is rather a mortifying one. The power of wealth, even of wealth in which we have no interest, is overwhelming. It has ever been so since the world began; whoever becomes the envied possessor of a few extra thousands, has a more obvious power on the surface of society than the man of genius or learning can possibly have; and if he would live in society he must submit to take the tone which has been given to it by such people. We need not then wonder that persons of high intellectual pretensions so often decline society. It suits not the free mind, which finds its best pleasure in the exercise of its highest powers, to spend its precious hours and energies where every emotion of the soul must be suppressed, and every independent thought is voted "bad taste," if it do not happen to chime in with the tone of the circle. If we would give our social intercourse the charm whose absence we so often regret, we must learn to distinguish between true delicacy and justness of taste,—a quality referable to principles and not amenable to fantasy—and that fickle tyrant fastidiousness, which claims despotic power, and wields its sceptre so capriciously that we may as well ask a fool to "render a reason."

The fastidiousness of society does not content itself with repressing the natural expression of our feelings on subjects comparatively indifferent; it carries its pretensions still further. Certain topics of great importance, of the first moment, are prohibited altogether. It is considered bad taste, and voted indubitable cant, to introduce the subject of religion; one may talk of church affairs, discuss the sermon *ad libitum*, pass the most sweeping judgment on the character and manner of the pastor, the dress and behavior of his wife,

and the management of his family; may point out the inconsistent behavior of church members, and so confess by implication that there is a standard somewhere; but to speak of religion itself, seriously and practically; to make its experience or its duties the theme of conversation, is to dare looks of cold dislike, and to make one's company shunned like a pestilence. It used to be considered *mauvais ton* to "mention hell to ears polite," but in modern society it will hardly do to allude to heaven. And this is not to be ascribed so much to the irreligiousness of those who proscribe sacred subjects, as to the general impression, the effect of false notions of civilization, that only mediocrity of talk is safe; that whatever would quicken the dull flow of the blood, bring color to the cheek and fire to the eye, is dangerous in society. This is undoubtedly the great reason why religion is so much left, even among people who would like to be good if they could, for Sunday use and cultivation, and for times of affliction, when emotion is not out of place, because the depths of the soul are stirred by God himself, and man has no power to enforce the ordinary chilling calm.

We would not be considered as pleading for what is sometimes called religious conversation, too often as far from truth and nature as the most inane talk of fashionable society; but for liberty to talk on whatever subject really interests us. This excludes cant and all prosing for effect. If it were allowable for all to talk on religious subjects when so disposed, there would be the less field for those who assume the right as if it were an exclusive merit. Perfect liberty for all would leave no temptation to hypocritical pretenders or weak devotees, for liberty induces a healthful action, which naturally extinguishes whatever is spurious and forced. Conversation is much impoverished by the exclusion of religion, for there is scarcely a subject of human interest which can be fully treated without refer-

ence to it. This may seem to some a sweeping assertion, but those who doubt may see an admirable exemplification of our meaning in two modern works by one author, "Modern Painters," and "The Seven Lamps of Architecture," by Mr. Ruskin, a writer who insists on the connexion not only of art but of every gratification of our higher nature with religion.

The exclusion of religious topics from conversation, includes, of course, the exclusion of all discussion of morals deduced from religion. Moral rules founded on social convenience and public order are within the pale; it is only when we would contemplate a code of morals which is somewhat stricter than the law of the land, that we offend fastidious taste. Here is another cause of barrenness, for who can dwell for ever in the merest externals, without becoming distressingly cold and empty? How is it possible to take an intelligent interest in human affairs, without contemplating them in their moral bearings, whether obvious or remote? If it be contended that to talk about these things is to do no good, we might refer to the objector's own experience, and ask whether, on close examination of the sources of some of his most important moral impressions, he does not discover that a sentiment uttered in ordinary conversation by some man of sense or piety lies at the very root of his convictions of duty. The arrows of truth stick, whether shot from formally prepared and authorized bows or not. The mind may be on its guard against regular teachings, while it will receive unquestioned an idea which, though presented by a seeming chance, is yet commended by truth to the understanding or the conscience. How important then is it to enjoy a free expression of sentiment on matters of importance! The 'word fitly spoken,' which is truly 'like apples of gold in pictures (baskets) of silver,' should never be lost, in deference to a pretentious and stolid fastidiousness. It is as much

our duty to bear our testimony to the truth when occasion offers, as to act conscientiously in any other way. To suppress the good word is a sin, and it is a sin to which society continually tempts the unwary. It is not long since we ourselves heard an ingenuous young person say, 'I felt as if I ought to say what I thought, but I did not dare.' 'Why not?' 'O, they would have thought me so disagreeable!' It is in vain to expect most persons to have the courage to be honest in the expression of unpopular sentiments at such cost, and every instance of conscious disingenuousness takes something from our self-respect and our courage in withstanding evil.

What is called fastidiousness in literature is, happily for literature, nearly out of date. The first demand now-a-days, is that a writer shall say something, and only the second that he shall say it well. Mere style is but little esteemed, except so far as it has direct fitness to convey ideas clearly. There is plenty of criticism of style, but its grounds are more manly than they were a hundred years since. There are hypercritics of course, but nobody minds them, and the usual tone of remark on books is so general, that we are in danger of falling into a neglectful habit of writing, through lack of that sharp and carping spirit which was fashionable in the days of Warburton and Ritson. The few who still attempt to be noted for literary fastidiousness are usually heard to utter only sentences of lofty and general disapprobation. They do not like the book! But why? Oh, they do not know! They are unfortunately rather fastidious! It is hard to extract anything like criticism from these objectors. They do not like to commit themselves by specific remarks which might be refuted. They prefer the safe dignity of indefinite censure. There is no disputing about taste, and this saves all trouble of argument and explanation. It may be suggested to this class of fastidious people that not only good common sense,

but taste, knowledge, sensibility, and sympathy are required to make literary judgment worth anything, and they may, perhaps, be profitably advised to read what Coleridge has said of critics who decide without the aid of these qualities. We must know what a work ought to be, before we are competent to say what it is.

Delicacy of taste in all things is one of the most charming and desirable of qualities. It supposes in the first place great perfection and sensitiveness of bodily organization, in the second, high cultivation, and in the third, a moral tenderness which is tremblingly alive to the most delicate test. Without the last of these requisites the others are null or worse; with it they are indeed things to be thankful for. It was our lot once to meet a gentleman who had lost his sight and hearing, yet retained his taste in even increased sensibility—a circumstance which occasioned the keenest mortification to his high-strung and proud mind, because it assimilated him with the beasts. Yet who has not known people who prided themselves on this very quality, without reference to any other? True delicacy is founded on principle; it selects and rejects for a reason. Mere fastidiousness is often either conscious coarseness attempting a redeeming and *genteelifying* trait, or ambitious vulgarity aping the refined. Delicacy is consistent, because it is real; fastidiousness forgets to be so when the inducement is absent. Delicacy is sensitive for others; fastidiousness is too often mere self-indulgence slightly veiled. Delicacy is always conciliated by what is intrinsically good; fastidiousness is disgusted by any originality even of virtue. Delicacy is at home even in a desert; fastidiousness can exist only in the atmosphere of a pseudo-refinement. Delicacy accompanied Catharine Vonder Wart, when she watched alone in the open storm all night by her husband, wiping the foam of agony from his lips, and bearing up his spirit as he lay stretched upon the

rack; fastidiousness would have stayed at home, wringing her hands and tearing her hair perhaps, but never thinking such service possible.

But whither are we tending? We have been led to maiming and macerating our flower indeed, to an extent which even botany will hardly justify. Do we seem to have treated our subject harshly? It is only seeming. The moment we begin to analyze we must necessarily wear the appearance of severity. Is it—can it be—needful to say that after all we have said about fastidiousness, there are some fastidious people whom we love dearly, and who are full of all good things? When we treat a subject of this nature, we must be indulged in a complete abstraction, which allows us to call everything by its plainest name, give it its true meaning, and trace it out to its legitimate consequences. It is in applying our remarks, that allowances are to be made and special circumstances and balances considered. That is the business of the reader rather than of the writer. Of the writer is to be required only the most rigorous impartiality of research, and of course the most unflinching self-application!

## BUSH-LIFE.

'Adieu, thou beautiful land! Canaan of the exile, and Ararat to many a shattered ark. Fair cradle of a race for whom the unbounded heritage of a future that no sage can conjecture, no prophet divine, lies afar in the golden promise-light of Time. . . . . None can tell how dear the memory of that wild Bush-life becomes to him who has tried it with a fitting spirit. How often it haunts him in the commonplace of more civilized scenes! With what an effort we reconcile ourselves to the trite cares and vexed pleasures, 'the quotidian ague of frigid impertinences,' to which we return!'

So sings, in mellifluous prose, the fastidious author of 'Pelham', in his healthiest work, 'The Caxtons,' goodly fruit, it is said, of the purifying influences of Water! When Wordsworth boasted of being a water-drinker, Professor Wilson jocosely observed that he could well believe it, from the lack of spirit in his poems. But Bulwer shows no diminution of spirit in the new novel; he has only changed from a wrong spirit to a right one. The book abounds in manly sentiments, in place of the old, tedious, sentimental dandyism; and one of the most striking things is the boldness which sends forth its heroes to brave the hardships and trials of new-country life.

England seems learning, in a new and unexpected way, to sympathize with the United States. She has looked upon the rapid settlement of our new, western country, as from a far height of civilization, holding up dainty hands at the idea of such rudeness of manners, and considering our whole country tinged—as indeed it is—by certain results of the growth and activity of the West. But lately her turn has come. She is now sending not only her convicts, but her younger sons, her too-active reformers, her scapegraces, and her youth of more nerve than fortune, to people her distant islands; to hunt wild asses, and to tame kangaroos. Then, like a good mother as she is, spreading her wings for the protection of her brood, she begins to tell us what a fine manly thing emigration is, how much better it is for young men—and young women, too—to brave the disagreeables of Bush-life, than to remain idle and effeminate and unprovided for at home. Two of the most striking fictions of the day (not to speak of inferior specimens), the one to which we have alluded, and another—a poem in hexameters—called 'The Bothy of Toper-na-Fuosich,'—send their heroes to Australia, with a heartiness of approval which makes light of the roughness of life in the wilderness, and seems for the time to find the boasted civilization of the mother country rather sickly and feverish by comparison. This is charming! it foretells some diminution of national prejudice; for whatever may be the feelings cherished by London and Liverpool towards New York and Boston, a brotherhood will surely spring up between Australia and the wide West: nor will home influence on either side be able to counteract the sympathy which common toils, privations, customs, hopes, naturally originate. The Bushman of Australia is essentially the same being with the western settler. Anglo-Saxons both, and too strongly characterized by that potent stock to show much subjection to the

accidental traits which have been the consequence of the rending of the race into two half-inimical portions in the old and new worlds, the circumstances of Bush-life will restore the pristine unity, and awaken a feeling of brotherhood too strong for the pride, prejudice, and jealousy of either party to resist. Every book, therefore, that depicts Bush-life, helps on this unity. In discovering how completely the hopes, occupations, habits, labors, privations, and pleasures of a new-country life are one and the same, whether the mild skies of Van Diemen's Land, or the brilliant ones of Wisconsin bend above the settler, we are brought at once to a mutual recognition of the natural bonds that bind man to his fellow, and learn to acknowledge gladly all our human ties, and with an especial warmth those which unite us to brethren in a common fortune.

It is cheering to find the subjects of an ancient and over-ripe civilization, which has already produced some ruinous as well as some splendid fruits, beginning to recognize the dignity of labor—at least beginning to own that labor and hard living are not necessarily degrading. A character once familiar to English writers and readers—that of a younger son, too proud to work, and too self-indulgent to endure the privations attendant upon small means, existing as a hanger-on in the family of the heir—will never come within the cognizance of the next generation. The axiom once accepted that a man, in whatever station, is exalted and not debased by work, the class will disappear. Add to this new doctrine a recognition of the benefits attending self denying and robust personal habits, and the law of primogeniture will in part become its own antidote, by supplying the out crops of the great Island with a class of settlers at once hardy and generous, thrifty and noble-minded. Leaving field sports to their elder brothers, these more hopeful sons of Old England will make sport of earnest, and feel

none the less proud of the antlers on their walls, because the venison to which they belonged was a necessary of life instead of a luxury.

People who have only heard or read of life in the wilderness have but crude notions of its actual characteristics. No way of life more absolutely requires to be tried, in order to be understood. The accepted idea perhaps includes wolf-hunts, and bear-fights, and deer-shooting; sleeping in the woods, fording rivers, following Indian trails, or wading streams in search of fish. This view of things is a poor preparation for the reality of life in the wilderness. It makes charming books, as witness the many of which it has formed the staple; but for the plain truth of the matter, such as forces itself upon every man's convictions after he has transferred his domicile and his household gods to the woods, we might as well go to the melancholy Jacques where he lies

> 'Weeping and commenting
> Upon the sobbing deer'—

for a practical notion of forest life. It is, indeed a life of hardship, but, 'with a difference.'

Hardships are not always trials. There is a rousing power in wild adventure, which makes hunger and cold and hard lodging and press of danger only inspiring. These are not the things that try the souls of those who exchange a condition of high civilization for the privations of the woods. Far more wearisome, because somewhat mortifying, are the petty circumstances attending the daily cares for mere subsistence which form the staple of sober existence in a new country; where a man goes not to hunt and fish, but to repair his fortunes by industry and economy; to 'buy and sell and get gain;' to win the treasures of the soil with hands used only to the pen; to fell primeval trees with an axe that has never

cut anything larger than a fishing rod. Such an adventurer may carry everything with him but the one thing needful,—habits suited to the exigence. Even a stout frame and a stout heart will not suffice at first. Time alone can accomplish the assimilating process, and for time he cannot wait.

Emigrants are apt, at the outset, to feel somewhat of reforming zeal. They have just left regions where life wears a smooth aspect; where convention hides much that is coarse and unpleasant; where the round of human business and duty is comprised in a few convenient formulas, or seems to be so; and where each man, using, as it were, the common sense and experience of the whole, naturally fancies himself wiser than he really is, and where he is indeed practically wiser than isolated man can easily be. So the emigrant feels as if he had much to tell; something to teach, as well as something to learn. If he must depend somewhat on his neighbors for an insight into the peculiar needs of his new position, he is disposed to return the favor by correcting, both by precept and example, some of the awkward habits, the ear-wounding modes of speech, and unnecessary coarseness which he sees about him. Above all does he determine that the excellent treatise on farming which he has studied and brought with him, shall aid him in introducing, before very long, something like a rational system, instead of the short-sighted, slovenly, losing, hand-to-mouth practices which are wasting the riches of the land.

The waking-up is quite amusing. To find that nobody perceives his own deficiencies, while everybody is taking great pains to make yours apparent; that your knowledge is considered among your chief disabilities; that you are, in short, looked upon as a pitiable ignoramus, stuffed only with useless fancies, offensive pride, silly fastidiousness, and childish love of trifles; that your grand farming

theories are laughed at, and your social refinements viewed as indicating a sad lack of common sense and good feeling;—the blank and helpless sense of unfitness that comes over one under such circumstances is indescribable. This is always supposing that you are unequal to bodily labor. If you can chop or plough, there is confessed to be something of you, even though your ideas be silly. But if, coming from a land where head is all-powerful and hand only subservient, your muscles are feeble and your brain active, you must be content with the position of an inferior, and for awhile play the part of a child in the hands of older and wiser people.

This aspect of Bush-life lacks the pleasant stimulants with which the imagination is apt to invest it. Where are the hunting and fishing which were to cheer your leisure hours? You have no leisure hours; and if you had, to spend them in hunting and fishing would set you down at once as a 'loafer'—the last term of condemnation where everybody works all the time; lives to work rather than works to live. Your fine forest dreams give way before the necessity for 'clearing.' If you take a morning walk over the breezy hills, it will probably be in search of a stray cow; and you may find it necessary to prolong your stroll indefinitely, returning, under the blazing sun of noon, to dinner instead of breakfast. Your delightful, uninterrupted evenings, where so many books were to be devoured, in order to maintain a counter-influence to the homely toils of the day, must be sacrificed, perhaps, to sleep, in order to be ready for an early start in the morning, in search of additional 'hands' at the threshing, or that most valuable and most slippery of all earthly goods in the new country—a 'hired girl.' If you chance to have an old friend undergoing a similar probation ten or twenty miles off, and feeling a yearning desire to seek counsel or sympathy at his hands, be sure that after you have made up your

mind to sacrifice everything to this coveted visit, which you feel will set you up in courage for a month to come, you will find you 'cannot have the horses,' without such a derangement of the business at home as would bespeak an insane disregard of your interest, and lead your whole dependency to look upon you as a fool past praying for.

Has new-country life, then, no pleasures? Many; but they are not exactly those we anticipate. To recur to the testimony with which our musings began. 'None can tell how dear the memory of that wild Bush-life becomes to him who has tried it with a *fitting spirit!*' And it could hardly become dear to the cultivated, if it were that mere dull, mechanical, animal, grubbing existence that some suppose it to be. Wherein then consists the charm? It is hard to specify; for, like other charms, it has something of inexplicable magic in it. We spend our lives here in weaving nets for ourselves, yet we delight to throw them off; even as the merchant who prides himself on the well-fitted coat, the neat cravat, the spotless gloves, the shining boots, in which he proceeds to his counting-house in the morning, enjoys with all his heart the privilege of exchanging them for the easy *douillette*, soft slippers, and general *negligé* of a quiet evening at home. Dress, and ceremony, and formal behavior seem necessary in the city—*seem*, not *are*—for humanity is more truly dignified than convention, and more effective in every way;—but in the woods we may follow nature—dress to be warm or to be easy, or to be picturesque, if we like, without shocking anybody. We have in town perhaps all the essentials of liberty; we are more alone and independent in a crowd than in a thinly settled neighborhood; but in the country we have the *sense* of liberty; the free breezes suggest it; the wide expanse of prospect; the unconstrained manners of those about us; the undis-

guised prominence of the common matters of daily life—so carefully kept out of sight in our anxious refinement; all remind us and seem to us symbolical of an ideal liberty. There are no fixed 'business hours' or 'visiting hours;' we may work all day if we like, or we may make a call at seven in the morning; and although we shall never care to do these particular things, it is yet pleasant to think we *may* do them. It is true, other people's large liberty sometimes infringes a little on ours; but after all, there is a vast surplus in our favor, since we have really more of it, with all chance deductions, than we know what to do with. The idea—the feeling—is the main thing. This is certainly the chief source of the fascination of a wild western life.

The inspiring influence of progress is however very potent in its way. To see everything about you constantly improving, is delightful. There is an impression of young, joyous life in such a state of society. As the breath and atmosphere of infancy is said to infuse new animal spirits into the sluggish veins of age, so the fresh movement of new-country life stirs the pulses of him who has long made part of a social system which claims to have discovered everything and settled everything, and to be resting on the result of past effort. If it be happiness to have all one's faculties in constant and profitable use, the dweller in the woods should be happy, for every day brings new calls upon his powers; upon his ingenuity, his industry his patience, his energy. Let him be 'many-sided' or even 'myriad-minded,' he will find use for all his faculties; it is only one-sided people—of whom there are, alas! so many—who find Bush-life intolerable.

This calling out of one's powers certainly gives a new aspect to many things that would seem intolerable if we were so placed as to depend on the services of others. There is something in human

nature which glories in performance, be the matter ever so humble. We might stand by in irrepressible impatience to see another bungling at some expedient, which appears very tolerable when it is our own work, as we have seen a gentleman really vain-glorious of a garden-gate of his own manufacture, which he would have discharged a workman for making. We put a portion of our very selves into these rude specimens of our handiwork, and we love them with a most paternal affection as long as they last. Is not some of the ennui of life referable to a disregard of this hint of nature? Would not something of the vapidity of which the spoiled children of refinement complain be remedied by the habit of doing something for ourselves—even if it were imperfectly done—instead of requiring the incessant intervention of servants and tradespeople? It would perhaps not be easy to find a rich man who is odd enough to keep an amateur work-bench, or a lady bold enough to perform some of the lighter household duties, suffering from that disgust of life which is the torture of some of the idle. It is at least certain that *dyspepsia* is a complaint unknown in the woods!

The enjoyment of health is then another of the pleasant things of true rustic life. (We talk not of agues! They must be caught and let go again—endured and forgotten—before one can know how truly healthy our western country and its out-door habits are.) *After one is acclimated*, there is probably no more favorable climate for health and longevity in the temperate zones. No skies—not the boasted ones of Italy—are clearer; their transparency is even remarked, not only by Englishmen, but by our own countrymen from the Atlantic shores. The stars and the aurora seem brighter there than elsewhere, and a long succession of brilliantly clear days is too common an occurrence to be noticed. This naturally contributes to good health and good spirits; and if people have sense

enough to live with some attention to the laws of health, they may defy the druggist, and live till they drain existence to the lees, enjoying the draught more and more as years mellow its flavor.

Do our western population generally make as much of their health-privilege as they are sure to do of a 'water-privilege'? Alas! where ague kills its units, hot bread, hot meat, pickles, and strong tea—to say nothing of accursed whiskey—slay their tens of thousands. No people live so insanely as our western brethren; in truth, nothing but the kind and genial climate saves them from the complication of horrid ills which beset the gourmand in our old cities. Butter is considered rather more a necessary of life than bread; in fact that which we call bread is almost unknown in some regions, hot cakes supplying its place at every meal. The "staff of life," however, is tea—strong, green tea. This is usually taken, unless poverty forbid, with breakfast, dinner, and supper, and without milk or sugar. With this is eaten *fried* meat, almost universally (we speak throughout exclusively of country habits), fried and swimming in fat. Infants partake of all these things; and if they are teething and fretful, they often have a peeled cucumber given them to nibble, by way of quietus, which indeed it may be supposed admirably calculated to become. That many young children die is therefore less astonishing than that some live. Those who do survive probably owe their chance of future years' hot bread to their being allowed to creep about in the open air as soon as they are old enough to be out of the mother's arms. The fine climate does all it can for them, and it does everything for those who will accept its kind ministering.

No inconsiderable variety and amusement are produced by the unfettered agency of nature and natural objects. Where the earth is hidden under piles of stone, nothing short of an earthquake can

produce very striking occurrences of a natural kind; but in the woods, hardly a day passes without something noticeable in earth, air, or water, or among their denizens. Tom Stiles, in felling a huge old oak, brings to light perhaps a hundred and fifty pounds of honey, which turns the whole neighborhood into a bee-hive for the nonce. John Nokes, mowing without boots, gets bitten by a rattlesnake, and a thrill of sympathy runs through the settlement. The road to his house is thronged with people from far and near, coming to urge remedies—all infallible—and to offer aid as nurses or watchers. Perhaps the musk-rats work so stealthily and so well that the mill-dam will be completely riddled or undermined, and the whole pond will run away in the night, leaving a huge scoop of long grass and stumps instead of the fair expanse of water which the setting sun delighted to dye with crimson and purple. Then every hand that can be hired is in requisition, and everybody who is not hirable thinks it necessary to spend nearly the whole time in looking on, lamenting, suggesting, advising, and prognosticating. Now the great business of the young men and boys is setting traps for quails and prairie-hens, and again every fallow is bespread with nets to catch pigeons; or perhaps Mr. A——, after sitting up all night to watch for the fox that robs his henroost of late, comes very near shooting that 'loafer,' Sam B——, who, though he will not work, unreasonably continues to eat, and of the fat of the land too. Or poor John Smith's stick chimney takes fire and burns his house and all that is in it, hardly excepting his wife and children. Then somebody must take wagon and horses and thread the whole region round about for aid in the shape of clothing, provisions, furniture' farming utensils and stock, to set him up again; while the neighbors fall to chopping and notching logs for a new house, and finish by having a famous raising and installing the sufferers in their rejuve-

nated domicile, with perhaps more of worldly goods than the fire found to consume, and hearts full of gratitude and joy.

Do these things and all that they typify seem trifles? Those whose hearts quake at the rise and fall of stocks should be ashamed to call them so. To the dweller in the woods they can never be trifles. And this brings us to what is perhaps after all the secret charm of a life far removed from pride and formality—the feeling of brotherhood. There is in every human heart not totally sophisticated, a capacity for this; but where men are crowded together in large cities, or subjected to the friction of keen and pitiless competition, it is well-nigh obliterated. Where all that each man gains may be said in some sense to be so much abstracted from the common stock, and where the brotherly feeling is not kept awake by any obvious dependence upon others, individualism and selfishness are too apt to prevail. But when, on the contrary, whatever each man does for his own profit is sure to turn to the advantage of all about him; when the means of life and comfort are drawn directly from the bounteous bosom of earth, not impoverishing, but enriching the source and fitting it the better to afford wealth to a coming generation; when the circumstances of life are such that each man is obliged to be personally indebted to his neighbor for many of those offices which affect most nearly our business and bosom, while common toils compel contact and consultation, and the state of things is adverse to any separation by ceremony—all the bonds of life are drawn closer; the heart is obliged to act, and the tone of manners becomes freer and more genial; less polite perhaps, but more humane; and after some little experience of this, a return to the cold polish of city intercourse seems indeed a plunging into frigid impertinences,'—a descent from the free mountain air which

braces every nerve to health and pleasure, to the calmer but more stagnant atmosphere of the plain.

The days of this fresh aspect of things are passing away. The influence of wealth and of facilitated intercourse will before very long produce a great equalization of manners. The West has already tinged not a little, as we said before, the social intercourse of the East in our country. We adopt her humorous expressions and even her scorn of the cherished conventions of the Old World. To be 'manly' is more prized among us than to be 'elegant,' even while we are reaching after liveries and other antiquated remnants of the pride of the dark ages. Our gentlemen print their cards with names ungraced by even the commonest title, leaving the 'Mr.' which used to be felt essential, to chiropodists and other pretenders. All this while the West is disposed to take up the politenesses we lay down, and her ambition is such that it will not be wonderful if she should in time devise some original ones of her own, so that to our descendants at no very remote distance, it may perhaps be hardly credible that the distinction between western manners and those of the older settled parts of the country was ever as great as it has really been up to our day.

But it is a state of things worth remembering. In an age and country where everything is doing, some things run the risk of being forgotten, for who can afford time for the 'slow' business of chronicling, in the very face of the lightning-flashes which are melting into one the Present, Past, and Future? With so much to accomplish for ourselves, can we be expected to think of the coming age, whose wings already fan our faces? When golden splendors are dawning, is it worth while to fix on the canvas, the sober hue of twilight?

For the sake of contrast, at least, let us preserve a clear recollec-

tion of the great West in her dress of 'hoddin gray,' by way of æsthetic, not humiliating contrast; as the rough disguise thrown off by the triumphant hero of the drama imparts new splendor to the robes he has been only veiling beneath it; or, more nearly, as the sun, in his might, turns the bars of purple cloud which for awhile obscured his disk, into a glorious ladder for his ascent to the meridian.

## STREETS AND SERVANTS AT HOME AND ABROAD.

I am fond of streets. If I had the uncontrolled chaperoning of an intelligent sight-seer, I should begin with the streets of a city, and thread them thoroughly before I sought out the accredited lions. Streets have a physiognomy, and very expressive it is. A stranger feels this directly. The impression is derived from many circumstances, of course; and these may all be sought out and specified; but we shall none the less feel that the whole is typical; and we shall find ourselves lonely or at home, sad or amused, according as we interpret the general aspect of a place which we visit for the first time.

It is not easy for a life-denizen to imagine how our goodly city of New York may strike a stranger; but we are often assured by country friends that the air of bustle is almost terrific, and that the commercial roar produces a temporary deafness, very confusing to the new-comer. It is said, too, that our citizens carry their business in their faces more than is usual: so that those who come for amusement see at first little prospect of it, or at least little hope of sympathy in it. Nothing is more common, therefore, than for

strangers to dislike New York at first; while nothing is more certain than they will become very fond of it in a little while.

It is to be feared that the first striking thing in the aspect of our city to a stranger must be unswept and jolting pavements. Sad! to feel that we receive our friends with a dirty face and unseemly costume, and can hardly hope to do otherwise while our present civic maxims or no maxims prevail. Since 'politics' is given as the cause of this disgrace, it is no wonder that ill-natured people accuse us of 'dirty politics;' but good-natured visiters turn their eyes and thoughts as quickly as possible to the substantial elegance of our buildings, and the richness and abundance of our merchandize, in the principal streets. Prosperity is the prevailing expression; a life springing from deep fountains; a grand flowering from golden roots; a hopeful reaching after more splendid successes; it must be a poor perceptive faculty that does not feel the influence of these on first threading our broad thoroughfares. It is perhaps the very sense of all this that discourages some quiet and modest people who have been accustomed to take the world easy, and be content with its humbler gifts and products.

But we are not all hurry and bustle, brick and mortar, carts and omnibusses. Many a quiet, airy, smooth and comfortable spot may be found, where there is still a confession of the love we all bear to green fields and cool waters. Poor and inadequate as our parks confessedly are, it were ungracious not to count them among the expressive points of the city. Let us walk in them and try to appreciate the delicious contrast between the fresh, inimitable works of God, and the ambitious poverty of man's doings? Look at those living, waving trees, describing with every passing breeze all the lines of beauty, the dwellings of the bird and the bee, givers of cool shadows to the weary; the very sight of them is pleasant to

the soul, bringing back soft memories of early days, when cost entered not into our estimate of the beautiful, and when the heart's avenues were open to every simple and natural enjoyment; when the spring-time was a jubilee for us as well as for the birds and grasshoppers, because we had as little thought for the morrow. Then the grass—a velvet that no earthly loom can imitate—how grateful both to foot and eye—how its moisture tempers the burning noon, and gives back the parting sunbeam—what a glory it receives from the contrast of the stony pathway, looking like fresh-hearted enthusiasm by the side of the hardness of the mere man of the world!

But as the crown of all—the parent and auxiliary of the trees and the grass—we must count among our blessings the Fountain—fit emblem of spontaneous and ungrudging goodness—gentle minister of music and freshness—unconscious wearer of pearls inumerable, giving back rainbows to the sunbeams, and breaking into dimples beneath the shower. Here nature is indeed indebted to man; here is an offset to the proud piles which would fain crush out her beauty, and banish her more common aspect from his costly haunts. In these silver showers—ascending like prayers, to return like them in silent but life-giving dews—we make compensation for such slighting of the good gifts of the universal Mother. If we made as beneficial use of all the materials she so bountifully offers us, we might appropriate her smiles without self-reproach.

Ignominiously as we treat the face of nature for our own selfish purposes, hiding it under stones as if it were not fit to be seen—how benignly she forgets it all, and smiles upon us wherever we will let her? Not a crevice in the close-rammed flagging but shows a bright fringe of green after every shower; not a vacant lot but dresses itself in beauty, though trodden only by chiffoniers and coal-

sifters, and used but by the children of vice and misery for the sorting of their pickings and stealings. The boundless munificence—the bursting plenty of nature, seems never more striking than in these manifestations of productive power under every disadvantage.

Speaking of the aspect our city must wear to the eye of a stranger, reminds me how little we know of it ourselves; how we thread its avenues on our business and pleasure without a thought of what they are and what they mean—teeming with human life, human wants and woes, hopes and achievements. Our ceaseless habit of pursuit forgets to take cognizance of all but itself. Street pictures are for strangers only. We who are at home think of our great thoroughfares only as the means of access to somewhere else, while to eyes from abroad they are the reflex of ourselves.

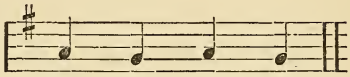
We must be allowed to flatter ourselves that they are very good-natured streets. Can anybody tell of harsh treatment to the wayfarer who would makes inquiries as he walks—to the little child in danger from the rush of carriages—to the beggar who sits plaintive by the way-side? Accidents we have—too many; they are incident to hurry; but rude behavior is hardly known, certainly not characteristic. Let us hold fast by this; it is better worth boasting of than some things of which we hear more. We are a sympathetic people, at worst.

Few of our readers, perhaps, know anything of the aspect of summer morning in the city. It is worth getting up to see. I do not speak of sunrise; it may seem incredible to some, but it is really day a long time before the sun begins to set the east on fire with the far-spreading gold that forms so magnificent a back-ground for chimneys and steeples. And further, there are classes of people awake and astir hours before the sun, in order that all the breakfast delicacies may be ready for Miss Julia and her mamma, when they

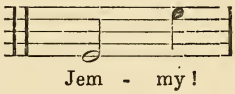
choose to enhance the day by opening their eyes. One may know the hour on a clear warm morning, by the earliest rumble of grocers' and market-mens' carts. It is then three o'clock, as near as may be, and many of the wheels sound as if they were still very sleepy, while others dash along with desperate resolution, shaking the windows as they pass. After this earliest squad—this van-guard of the industrial army—has passed, there usually occurs a considerable interval. It seems at first like silence, but after the ear vibration has subsided a little, one becomes aware of the crowing of innumerable cocks—public-spirited creatures, who do their best to arouse the lazy, and apparently nearly split their throats in the service. I have little doubt they steal a later nap now and then, after waking all the neighbors. I know several housewives who do this, as soon as they are sure every soul in the house is afoot. Hunt speaks of the pleasure of 'being in bed at your ease, united with the highest kind of advantage over the person that is up. 'It is a lordly thing,' he says, 'to consider that others are up and nobly doing some duty or other, with sleepy eyes, while we ourselves are exquisitely shutting ours.' This is a kind of lordliness enjoyed by many during the morning hour, but I am by no means sure that they have the best of it. On the contrary, much observation of the getting-up class leads me to believe, that in a fine flow of spirits to begin the day with, they have something of which to boast over those who are more intentionally luxurious.

The earliest wheeler through the street after daylight is the milkman, and of all he is the most joyous. Mark the air with which he clatters up to the kerb-stone, so close that the slope of the street gives his frail wagon the very last cant it will bear without upsetting his tall cans and the vehicle together. Then hear the cheery whoop

with which he calls out the sleepy damsel of the kitchen—not a plaintive semi-tone like the charcoal-man's,




nor a sad minor, like the fruit-womans, nor the octave in which the anxious mother calls her truant boy, thus:




but a wild, funny, unwriteable howl, expressive at once of haste, good-humor and good understanding with the cook, who is to pop up from the area. If she does not come at once—and she seldom does—liking 'lordliness' perhaps, as well as her lady—the jolly milk-man shouts once more, with the addition of 'wide awake!' or, 'all alive now!' or 'come, my girl!' though this last is generally reserved till the papilloted head comes in sight. With the earlier milk-men this is all; for there is something of a sobering effect in the cool morning air. But the later ones, warmed with the sun, and perhaps somewhat exhilarated by much whooping and the sight of a good many pretty faces, sometimes venture upon little tricks; like one I witnessed lately. The girl was sweeping the side-walk when the cart drew up, and she dropt her broom and ran in for the pitcher. The moment her back was turned, the milk-man jumped out of his cart, seized the broom, hid it behind a tree, and was in his seat again in an instant, looking laboriously unconscious. When the damsel came with the pitcher, she glanced round after her broom, but said nothing; but, while the milk was lading out, slyly

stole the whip from the station where it hung jauntily outward, and put it behind her back unobserved. The milk-man handed her the pitcher before he perceived the theft, but it was only an instant. And then such a leap, such a flight, such a laugh, such a spilling!

After the milk-man comes the baker—grave and sometimes crusty, for he has been up a little *too* long. The oven-heat of his home, too, has something unnatural and exsiccating about it. Your baker has his face ploughed in wrinkles, from the solicitude with which he watches the operation of his leaven; or he is tired with working the cracker-machine. At any rate he is usually of the soberest, especially when flour is low, for then he knows people will expect large loaves; while in times of scarcity he may make them unlimitedly small, pleading the necessity of the case. He is always slow to believe in the fluctuation of prices downward, but timid and easily alarmed when quotations add a shilling to the barrel. He is interested too in the price of potatoes, and they do say in that of certain mineral substances; but for particulars we must refer the reader to "Accum on Culinary Poisons."

All this time, ash-carts, dirt-carts, grocers' carts and empty carts have been rumbling along, making such a noise that one can scarcely hear one's-self think. The sun has risen above the chimneys, and the rain of yesterday glitters on the oriental-looking boughs of the ailanthus-trees, as the light breeze makes them tremble. Two forlorn rag-pickers have already made a minute search through the neighborhood, especially in a vacant lot at the corner—a sort of Golgotha, where every body throws every thing that has no particular destination, and some things that have—coal-ashes for instance, which rise there in mounds that threaten to rival the (I forget its name) Hill in Rome, whose foundation is pot-sherds. The golden sun now glorifies all, however, even the place of rubbish and

stramonium, and makes the long rows of windows in —— street blaze with splendor. The birds, whose twittering song passed unnoticed during our observation of the carts, now seem newly wakened, and fill the air with rural-*ish* sounds—not quite rural, for one wonders where they live—in what smoke-dried and dust-clogged evergreens and altheas—for, if they dared build in the street trees, their twitter would be short. Oh! the grape-vines with which the yards in the upper part of the city abound, afford them fine shelter, doubtless, with the aid of the few fruit trees that still hide their diminished heads, or hang them over the neighbors' fences low-spiritedly. Much of the singing, at this later hour, must be from the canaries and other caged birds that begin to show at the open windows, 'striving which can, in most dainty variety, recount their wrong-caused sorrow.'

The ice-men, chilled, perhaps, by associations belonging to their craft, do not make demonstrations as early as others. Indeed, it is but now and then a phenix among them that gives you your ice in time for breakfast. But when they do come they have a hurrying, jolly air, that is very pleasant. They spring out, milkmanishly, clinking the great dangerous-looking tongs, and, *grabbing* the destined lump with a decided air, make it swing from side to side. But look into the cart. What more than grotto-like coolness! One can scarcely believe that those enormous blocks are 'soon to slide into a stream again,' or that now, rocky as they are, one could split them with a pin. It must be confessed that, ungainly thing as an ice-cart is, with its straight, poking, green body, there is none, of all that pass on a hot morning like this, whose rumble is so musical.

The fruit-woman are all this time chanticleering along, with ever a sad tone in their screeching. It may be fancy, but I can always hear in that cry a complaint of some sort. I hardly know how to

interpret it. Perhaps it bespeaks only a less hopefull nature than animates the gay milkman. Or it may relate to the uncertainty attached to selling so perishable an article as fruit; or to the remembrance of domestic affairs suffering at home, while the mother tries to gain a few pence by toiling through the street, hour after hour. Here is a case where one may reasonably wish one's toil to be fruitless; but the poor woman cannot console herself with quibbles. There goes one who has a chubby daughter with her—one walking on one side of the street and the other opposite—both screaming, but alternately, and with a pretty variance. This is not so melancholy; for misery even on a small scale, loves company.

That stout Irishman, lazily pushing the pine-apple cart, is a contrast to the anxious fruit-woman. His face expresses, to be sure great discontent that the world does not better appreciate the merits of a son of Erin than to allow him to work such hot weather; but his setting-forth of his wares has a funny sound, and seems to defy fate. I should like him better, as a fruit-seller, if he had some infirmity (besides whiskey), for it seems hard that able-bodied men should usurp the few chances that feeble people and women have for getting bread.

The sweet song of the chimney-sweep is comparatively rare in these anthracite days. But what music the dark-skinned people, who enjoy this profession by prescription, can make. There is one who passes my door sometimes with an Italian recitative in the softest tenor voice, yet filling the air with a volume of sound. If nature had but blanched him he could make his fortune on the stage. As it is they would not let him sing even Otello.

We put the colored man into funny attempts at livery sometimes —(American liveries!) and even, for certain purposes, in uniform; thus allowing him to stand as a representative of the two things we

are said to love best—wealth and military display. In whatever character he appears, he is always a picturesque, and, to unprejudiced eyes, an agreeable part of our street panorama. He is so cheerful by nature that even oppression cannot sadden him, and so genial and good-natured that the worst training and the most discouraging circumstances fail to make him morose. I have been inclined to fancy, at times, that the hatred expressed towards the race by persons of certain temperament, was only resentment at their good humor and patience. We do not like to see people so much better able to make use of whatever of earthly good Providence allows than ourselves. The disposition to enjoy is Heaven's blessing to the poor colored man, and it gives a light to his quaint face hardly ever extinguished, even by hopeless toil and compulsory degradation.

If prosperity be the expression of New York streets, pride seems to me that of the great thoroughfares of London, even where commerce reigns. Our streets suggest the Future, those of London the Past. London feels that that she has attained, and there is a calmness even in her bustle. The compulsive Anglo-Saxon element reduces even foreign things and faces in London to a certain uniformity with things and faces English. Consciousness of England is written all over everything and everybody. The Greatness of the land is a Presence from which none can escape. In Paris one may feel like a citizen of the world, and as if he had as much right in the Boulevart and the Champs Elysées as any one; in London he is always conscious of being a 'foreigner,' and only on suffrance. This accounts for the dislike of London so commonly expressed by Americans, who are notoriously fond of Paris. It touches an American in the tenderest point to be made to feel that his absence

would be at least as agreeable as his company, and this he always feels in England—in London particularly.

The streets of London are London more truly and peculiarly than the galleries of Art, the showplaces, or even the cathedrals,—for it is in the streets that we see the people, with their faces full of every-day expression; all the marks of national bent and habit displayed; the eagerness of gain, the lassitude of pleasure, the consciousness of vice, the despair of poverty. Wealth is more fully shown in the street than in the drawing-room, for the splendors of a night may be hired, but the grandeur and exquisiteness of an equipage can hardly fail, to an instructed eye, to represent truly the fortune and habits of its possessor. English carriages and horses are confessedly the most elegant and perfect in the world, and these abound at certain hours in the West-End streets. It is in these that the most striking difference exists, to the traveller's eye between London streets and those of our cities. One is ready to conclude that half the people in London have carriages of their own.

But the countenance and manner of the passers on foot are not more like those we meet at home than the equipages. The English are a more natural-mannered, and of course a more individual people, than we; and they are therefore better worth looking at in the street. Far from wearing a street face,—a conventional countenance, which makes palpable reference to the fashion and to the opinion of the passers-by, one has the impression that English people look as they feel, or at least just as they have a mind to look. They do not stare at those they meet; they hardly seem to see you. There is no rapid, anxious perusal of your dress in passing. Nobody but the policeman at the corner ever looks you full in the face, as if he meant to know you again. Except in the Strand, and other exclusively business-streets, nobody seems in a hurry; and even in

those crowded thoroughfares there are quite enough leisurely-looking people to remind you that not everybody works, in England. Driving and walking are both necessarily slow, because of the throng; and if any unexpected detention occur, people do not immediately become frantic, as with us. Gentlemen's servants, in undress liveries, are seen mounted on fine horses, going errands at a very moderate pace, scarce seeming to see the busy faces on either side, but looking sedulously languid and abstracted, as if they were thinking of Hyde Park or St. James's Street, or other regions far removed from vulgar toil and bustle. Now and then a gentleman on horseback, followed closely by a servant in drab tights and gaiters with a cockaded hat, threads his quiet way towards the Bank, his very eye telling you that he is going only to draw money, not to earn or make it. Now a great, open, family carriage, with mamma and governess and some neatly dressed children, stops before a book or toy-shop, and the footman makes journeys back and forth, and anxious shopmen pass in and out, while the occupants of the carriage wear the air of the most enviable tranquility, till the last article is offered and approved; and the footman, with a slight sign of the hand to the coachman, jumps to his place, and the perfect equipage rolls onward as if, like heaven's gates, "on golden hinges turning." But the most numerous vehicles are one-horse cabs, which are used by all ranks, the hackney ones hired at very cheap rates, and private ones very neat but plain, and popular with those who can do as they like, and like to be comfortable rather than splendid. London streets set us an example in this respect which it would be well to consider.

When we explore the West End, with its parks, its palaces, its magnificent breadths and still more magnificent quietude, we are as much oppressed with the weight of centuries as at Thebes or Karnak.

The sense of how long it must have taken to bring these things to their present pass, adds an element of sublimity to the actual impression. Every house is so jealously guarded from intrusive eyes, that any thought of neighborhood or community is precluded. Doors are attempted only by servants, for no bevies of ladies are ever seen making morning calls on foot, as with us. Servants and horses are the only living creatures that move on the pavement, if we except the mechanics and tradespeople required by those oyster-like residences. The air is full of silence, rendered all the deeper by the distant roar of the peopled city, or made striking by the occasional clatter of hoofs and wheels. There is no hint of common life at those aristocratic doors. Now and then a footman lingers a little for a chat with a pied brother, or takes a look up and down the street before he makes all fast again; but when he goes in, it is with the air of Robinson Crusoe retreating into his fortress and drawing the ladder up after him.

The question has sometimes occurred to me, why is a livery-servant in London so different an object from a livery-servant in New York? In London, servants in livery are an appropriate and rather fascinating part of the street panorama. I speak now of everyday liveries,—those which simply mark the condition of the wearer, and indicate to the initiated the distinguished family in whose service he is. State-liveries are quite another affair,—the most horrid caricatures of human costume; mere grotesque disguises in the worst taste; the last contortion of ingenious pride; as silly as the whim of a certain exquisite to personate a game-cock at a masquerade, with the additional "features" of clapping his wings and crowing. My Anglo-Saxon blood boils at the sight of Englishmen degraded enough to be proud of such disguises. Yet it is not worth while to consider the wearers as men, while they

carry about these strange shells of lace and frippery:—they are machines; parts of a system; they have for the time no souls of their own; they are bought and sold, in effect, by virtue of a contract, signed with the vital current of their minds, to the demon of this world, the deadly antagonist of the spirit of health and of a sound mind. The maximum of intelligence to be found under those liveries is not sufficient to build a shanty in the Western wilds and provide bread and salt for its inmates. Yet beings of this grade—as necessary to an aristocracy as dukes and earls—fare sumptuously every day; are full of secondhand haughtiness; practise the worst vices of their employers, and look down with contempt upon the honest tradesman who works for his living.

I do not mean to say that they are of a different class from the men who ornament London streets in ordinary liveries, for they are one and the same; but only that, as showing up the thing in its true character by exhibiting it carried out to extremes, they suggest deeper and more unpleasing thoughts. English livery-servants in their everyday costume, unlike their continental brethren, are rather gentlemanly as well as picturesque-looking men. I do not mean exactly gentlemanly like the gentleman of to-day in society; but with an old-fashioned tinge, like the genteel men in 'genteel comedy.' There is an air of antiquity about them, so that you cannot help, even in the common street, feeling as if they belonged to a past age, and were only walking about in a sort of ghostly dream on the *pavé* of to-day. They are tall and well made, and somewhat pale and delicate in complexion, owing to late hours and unwholesome habits; their manners are languid and indifferent,—a trick caught from their employers, who depend on it for much stylish effect. Mrs. Browning hits off the studied outside of the masters well, in her poem of "Lady Geraldine's Courtship:"

"Very finely courteous,—far too proud to doubt his domination
Of the common people, he atones for grandeur by a bow.

High, straight forehead; nose of eagle; cold blue eyes, of less expression
Than resistance; coldly casting off the looks of other men
As steel, arrows; unelastic lips, which seem to *taste possession*,
And be cautious lest the common air should injure or distain."

It is not wonderful that a footman should reflect that which most distinguishes his master from the commonalty, for the quality which makes him rather be a footman than a blacksmith disposes him to instinctive, indolent imitation. Effeminacy is essentially imitative, having no energies to expend upon originating. The master's proudly quiet manners may tacitly refer to the history of a past age, or to a consciousness of the wealth that can buy everything but history; but the servant is only a mirror, with nothing better or deeper than a board to back it; giving the image, but knowing nothing of the soul of what it reflects.

It would be a curious thing to find out how large the mental horizon of a regular footman really is. To us he seems less than the ninth part of a man. He who "sits a' day prickin' at a clout, like a lassie," has a house of his own, though it be a poor one; he orders his own dinner, though potatoes be the only dish; his wife and children look up to him with a distinct notion of the place he holds in creation, as being husband (house-band) and father, and holding a recognized position in society. But a footman has no separate entity; he is an appendage, a complement, part of another man's equipage, like a horse or dog, and of just equal importance; a paltry, gilt frame to an exquisite picture; the padding of a court coat on which are embroidered grand badges of honor; a piece of the soft carpet (only the upper side cared for) on which fortunate men walk daintily up to consideration and higher fortune. He is

the band of no house; if he have children, they are not brought up in his sight. He has no citizenship, for his interest is merged in that of his master; if he think of public affairs, it is like a dunce; if he talk of them, it is like a parrot. His notion of a legislator is of a gentleman who goes to "the 'Ouse" every evening for a certain number of weeks, is asked out to dinner and gives dinners in return, and in September runs down into the country for the shooting season. He is well versed in the politics of the servants' hall; stands up manfully against cold meat, and is "above 'peaching" on the butler's peccadilloes, so long as that official furnishes ale of a proper strength; but beyond these points he is "in wandering mazes lost," —incapacitated even for wishing, with regard to public affairs.

It would be one of the most curious shows imaginable, to see a thorough-bred footman, and a vivid, untamed backwoodsman, face to face on a Western prairie. The wild man would look upon his liveried brother with a wonder tinged with pity and contempt. He would probably think at first that the strange object must be "some play-actoring fellow," or a stray member of the caravan whose show-bills decorated the village when he last carried wheat to market; while the poor travestied Anglo-Saxon from the old world would gaze with timid eye on the rough-rinded farmer, brown and knotty as one of his own oaks, and secretly conclude him a representative of the cruel aborigines, but one remove from the scalpers and tomahawkers of whom he had dimly heard through Canadian emigrants. Let these two far-divided brethren be compelled to pass the day together;—the one about his daily business, the other as an inquirer into the habits of the country and the means of obtaining a livelihood. How could their minds approach each other? How bridge over the immense chasms that lie between the life-maxims of a Western freeman and those of a London footman? How find words

significant to both of the same idea? In the footman's mind, "nice people" are people that keep their own carriage, while the Western man applies that term chiefly to neighbors who are willing to lend everything they have, and never ask to have anything returned. The Londoner, if he ever happened to have heard the old-fashioned word "hospitality," would understand by it giving splendid dinners, or filling one's country-house with gay company at Christmas; while our prairie friend would intend no less than accommodating a neighbor with a night's lodging though the only spare bed were in your sitting-room, where father, mother and children were already provided for; or taking in for a few weeks a forlorn family of Irish emigrants, half of them sick with the ague, and none of them possessed of a dollar wherewith to help themselves. If the farmer was in high spirits and inclined to boast of "success," what would the exotic from Piccadilly think when he was introduced to a rough and bare log cabin, standing in the midst of fields disfigured by stumps, and only half fenced;—the wife, worn with toil, nursing her baby and churning at the same time; the eldest daughter washing the dishes, and the little boy cutting his toes instead of splitting kindling-wood, as he had been attempting to do? We can fancy just how the unhappy lackey would look and feel, if he were forced to begin life anew in such circumstances; but we can well believe, nevertheless, that though it might require many a hard rub to get the nonsense out of him, yet in the end his good blood would triumph, and he would learn to be a man among men, and look back to his days of "flunkeyhood" with a perfect loathing.

It is only just, after this fancy sketch, to imagine our hero of the axe bewitched into the neighborhood of Belgrave Square or Park Lane, and required to fill the forsaken shoes of the individual whom we have just seen adopted by the forest. But the picture cannot possi-

bly be a true match to the other, for the simple reason that no earthly power, to say nothing stronger, could ever force the backwoodsman into the livery of which his English brother was once proud. And how about the powdered head, of which we have as yet said nothing? Could a farmer ever consent to such impiety as the use of wheat—wheat! his grand staple—his daily thought and nightly dream—his synonyme for plenty—the ladder of his hopes—we had almost said the god of his idolatry—as an adjunct to the larded locks of a stander behind other men's chairs? We can fancy some kitchen *friseur* attempting to turn his black 'fell of hair' piebald by the application of distinct patches of white flour, according to the approved standard of Belgravia; but we see also the potent fists of the neophyte going round like steam-paddles in resistance; and we should portend woe to the unhappy artist if he carried the joke too far. Next we stick a very tall cane into Jonathan's hand, and order him to mount the foot-board and hold on for his life, ready nevertheless to jump down and offer a gentle elbow to his mistress, when she alights to cheapen a pair of tweezers at Strudwick's, or to try a court dress at Miss Mortimer's. Or we place him on a landing, in the midst of tropical plants and very classical statues, to call names for several hours—not according to the thoughts that would arise in his heart, but according to the Red Book;—'Lady Nims!' 'The Right Honorable Henry Algernon Gulliver!' and so on, while a shoulder-knotted brother at the head of the stairs echoes him like a mocking-bird, and the gentleman usher at the drawing-room door repeats the story. Would our green one call this an *easy* mode of getting his living? Or would he long for his plough, his harrow, and his heavy boots; his supper-table, covered with hot bread and fried pork; and the privilege of

voting at elections, and being himself elected path-master or constable?

I must not, however, hypocritically pretend that I am altogether of our rustic neighbor's mind and impulses in this matter. All my Americanism does not prevent me from perceiving and confessing that livery-servants are a very fascinating and graceful accessory to grandeur. The grandeur once accepted as right and proper, liveries are quite in keeping, and livery-servants the most splendid of human chattels. Those who have never seen this class of movables, may picture to themselves a number of well-looking men in militia uniforms, in attendance upon ladies and gentlemen and horses; elegantly dressed, and sedulously ignoring the existence of any other kind of people and any other business in life. This makes, of course, a display of magnificence which is enhanced by a touch of mystery, since both servants and masters affect to belong to a world entirely unconnected with our everyday one, (though we need not say they bear no particular marks of affinity with that which we are in the habit of designating as a 'better' world.) Liveries are quite as various, as gay, and as ridiculous as the uniforms of any of our city volunteers. A sky-blue coat, yellow waistcoat, and scarlet breeches, would be thought no unsuitable conjunction as a mark of servitude; and, in point of fact, liveries in this taste are often chosen by parties in whose estimation 'quietness' is the one crowning grace of human costume. There is refinement of cruelty in this, or rather refinement of haughtiness, for your true footman-soul believes itself inferior, and is prompted to no cutting comparisons. The feeling of *caste* is so sincere and operative in England, that it not only influences the whole moral life of the country, but extends beyond the grave, apparently without a misgiving on the part of master or servant. How many a tomb-stone

bears such an inscription as this: 'Erected by MARMADUKE MILLINGTON, of B——, in the county of ——, ESQUIRE, in memory of the humble virtues of John Stubbs, for thirty years a faithful SERVANT in his family.' One's mind passes spontaneously from such an epitaph to the appearance of the great man and the little man side by side before a bar where no liveries are recognized, and where the very same virtues, not a different set, are exacted from servant and master. But it will not do for us to follow the subject into its most serious recesses.

English haughtiness differs from American haughtiness in being sincere, and this brings us back to the thought with which we began—the different effect, picturesque as well as moral,—between English and American liveries. The sincerity of haughtiness is impious, the imitation or affectation of it more simply ridiculous, so that we should gain nothing by being honest in this matter. But is it not mortifying that Americans can weakly sell their birthright for a price too contemptible for valuation? We look down upon people who, hoping to seem what they are not, condescend to wear false jewelry and other mockeries of the rich; but what paste diamond or glass ruby is meaner than pretences at livery in the establishments of people of yesterday? The only grandeur at which American society can aim with honor, is that of a bold and true simplicity of manners; courage which dares to live out its natural and staple ideas; independence founded on conscious power and worth, which can afford to be original in small things as in great ones. The moment we forget this, and seek to mimic, at an immeasurable distance, the feudal tricks of decaying aristocracy, we renounce our real, undeniable claims, and get absolutely nothing in return. We condescend to imitation where equality is impossible, and confess a longing which Providence has, at our own desire, put

it out of our power to gratify. From so humiliating a position may all true descendants of our patriot sires be preserved!

There is but one way in which liveries can be made true badges of American nobility: this is by making them expressive of the origin of the families they are intended to dignify. The glory of our society is, that the highest spring from the humblest—and it should, therefore, be the aim of an enlightened pride to express this great fact—never generally operative in any other country known to history—in whatever public manifestations of present prosperity we see fit to adopt. If there is anything of which we may be excusably vain-glorious, it is that the son of the humblest mechanic may and does acquire, by worth and talent, not only wealth, but position and influence: while mere riches, though they command a certain consideration from the *esprit de corps* of the rich, and some servility from the meanness of the needy, do absolutely nothing towards securing public respect or esteem. Let us then, if we long for aristocratic distinctions, boldly seize those which belong to us. If few of us can trace back to gentlemen who, when they coveted a neighbor's property, stabbed him and took it, we can claim a far more honorable descent from honest farmers and carpenters, tailors and hatters. Surely he who tills the ground in the fear of God is a better man than he who soaks it with blood for his own selfish ends—he who builds his house honestly, than he who wrenches it from another by the strong hand. We may say to the feudal system and all that belongs to it: 'Oh, thou enemy! destructions are come to a perpetual end.' The spirit of to-day is constructive; and, if we use the ruins of the past, it must be to build a new plain. Why not, then, devise badges of our true honor? American liveries would so be grand, indeed. Alas, that those who adopt something so called should so often be found ashamed of their honest grandfathers!

The grandfathers doubtless return the compliment if they take cognizance of such matters.

I have seen as yet no attempt in our country to establish distinguishing marks of female servitude; but there seems to be no good reason why we should not humbly imitate England in this, as well as in putting collars and handcuffs on the men who drive our carriages or stand behind them. A woman-servant in England is considered insolent if she appear without a cap; and, in addition to this, her employers claim the right to enforce sumptuary regulations as to her general costume. It must indicate her station unmistakeably; and the slightest direct attempt at imitating those above her would be deemed insubordinate and ominous of evil. A silk gown would be 'flat burglary' in any servant below the rank of housekeeper. I ought to except the governess; who, though considered merely as an upper though peculiarly vexatious and trying servant, in most English families, is not restricted in the choice of her costume, except by the smallness of her salary. Shall we carry our aping throughout consistently? Shall we insist on caps, frown on silk dresses, and treat the instructors of our children as inferiors—thus doing our best to make them such?

So small a proportion of those who get their bread by domestic service in this country are Americans, that we need hardly consider how outward badges of servitude would sit upon the native American, or how they might in time affect his character. The very name of servant is a yoke too heavy for his pride. He is willing to perform a thousand menial offices under any other name; call him your friend, and he will act as your slave; call him your servant, and he will soon show you that he is his own master. He has not the least objection to the things to be done, but only to the position he must occupy in doing them; so that while no money

could hire him to put on a gay dress of your choosing, and stand idle in your entry, he will build stone fence for you, or risk his life on your roof, with no thought that he lowers himself by performing labor for your benefit. Work is his glory, servitude his detestation; there it not the least danger that he will ever, even for the sake of the 'almighty dollar,' become a livery servant; though he may so far forget himself as to keep one. His transgression of the democratic (or gospel) principle will never take that form. Our protest against American liveries regards employers only.

In view of this national feeling against domestic servitude—for the national objection is awakened far short of liveries—some people are a good deal concerned as to what we shall do for servants after the overflow of nations still subject to feudal ideas shall have ceased, and those who are now hewers of wood and drawers of water in tolerable contentment, shall have become thoroughly Americanized in feeling, and at the same time possessed of comfortable American homes of their own. This would be a very sad state of things indeed! That there should be no class of people poor enough to consent to live in our kitchens, and work for us instead of for themselves, would be 'most tolerable and not to be borne!' It cannot be that Providence means to deal so hardly with us, as to diffuse the advantages we prize so highly over the entire body of our citizens. Lord Lyttleton's Flavia says:—

'Where none admire, 'tis useless to excel!
Where none are beaux, 'tis vain to be a belle!'

So may we exclaim—

'Without the poor, what joys could wealth afford!
Without a servant, who would be a lord!'

The sense of contrast gives the zest to our advantages. Nobody ever makes a show in a desert; where admirers are lacking we content ourselves with substantials. A truly republican plainness of living would probably be the deplorable result of this hardly supposable state of things. But, without fearing anything so remote, would it not be prudent to provide, in some measure, against the possible evils of universal prosperity? Perhaps if we could make up our minds to treat our servants as fellow citizens now, the time when they would be disposed to shake off our service might be deferred. If we could refrain from enforcing *caste* in our treatment of our domestics; if we could engage the services of a cook as we do those of a shoemaker or a mason, i. e. without assumption on one side, or a hollow servility on the other, cooking might become a recognized trade, and our tables be well supplied, even after starvation no longer threatened a concocter of plum-puddings who should insist upon being 'as good as anybody!' Would it be dangerous to recognize the soul of a chambermaid? Would it not rather be apt to make her a better one, and longer content with the broom and duster, if we consulted her feelings, expressed an interest in her welfare, and saved her pride as much as possible? At present, it seems to be supposed that in the agreement as to wages, a certain amount of contumely is bargained for—not loud, indeed, but deep—not in words so much as in thoughts, and in the actions that flow unconsciously from thoughts. While this is the case, we cannot have American servants, and we ought not to have them. Our countrymen and countrywomen can do better; and so they forsake a business which ought to be as comfortable and lucrative as any other which demands the same grade of ability, and leave us to be half-served by people whose lack of both principle and capacity is too often the very reason why they are willing to be servants. The

consequence is, unspeakable wear and tear of temper, and all sorts of loss and mismanagement in our kitchens; corrupting examples for our children, and temptation to inhuman prejudice in ourselves. If we do not learn to consider our servants as human beings, they will certainly teach us that they are so; and enforced claims are as mortifying as voluntary concessions are graceful. The English treat their servants far better, with regard to the national ideas, than we do ours, considering our profession of democratic principle. We shall be forced, sooner or later, to harmonize more nearly our political theory and our social practice; and it will undoubtedly be discovered, in time, that, the only key to this difficulty, as to others growing out of our noble theory of life, is to be found in the gospel of Christ.

# THE LOG SCHOOLHOUSE.

It has been justly objected, with regard to the public idea of the means of literary culture in our country, that we are too fond of building our colleges of brick and stone, instead of laying their more solid foundations in professors and students. We certainly do practically give our assent to the vulgar notion that showy buildings are of the first importance in our seminaries of learning, able teachers only of the second. Funds that would bring talent from another hemisphere, or call it into action within our own borders, are often buried in monstrous fabrics which wait useless for years until new means can be raised for filling them with the teachers and pupils who are their ultimate object; and State pride is strangely gratified by gazing at these memorials of one of the many blunders of our materialism.

But there is a class of educational edifices to which no such objection can be made. The log schoolhouse in the deep woods is a far nobler proof of intellectual aspiration than any huge empty college building of them all. Its grotesque outline has, for the eye of the thoughtful patriot, a grace that mere columns and arches can never give—the grace of earnestness, of a purpose truly lofty in its seeming humility. A log schoolhouse is the veritable temple of

learning and religion, without the remotest idea of paltry ornament; devoted, in naked simplicity, to an idea which is its consecration and its beauty. 'Do the people need place to pray, and calls to hear His word?' says Ruskin, in that delightful book of his,* 'then it is no time for smoothing pillars or carving pulpits; let us first have enough of walls and roofs'—and no doubt a truer dignity attends the roughest erection that has a truly high purpose, than can be expressed in the richest material and the most elaborate forms that mere pride and vanity can compass or devise.

And this is not mere empty talk or æsthetic dreaming. The higher and more perfect the cultivation of mind and taste which the American traveller carries with him into the western country, the more of true and touching beauty will he see in the log schoolhouse that greets him, in some little unexpected clearing, as he takes his solitary way through the forest. He has passed, it may be, many a noble farm, with its fenced fields and ample barns, its woodlands resounding with the axe, and its chambers vocal with the spinning-wheel; he has seen the owner amid his laborers, sharing or directing their profitable toil; he has sat at hospitable boards, spread with the luxury of rural comfort thus provided, and inspected mills and factories, promising as Californian rivers; but all this had reference only to the material and the perishable. This was only the body whereof that uncouth log schoolhouse typifies the soul. The soul can do without the body, but the body becomes a loathsome mass without the soul. Indeed all this smiling plenty, this warm industry, this breathing quiet, is the fruit of the log schoolhouse, for did not public spirit, general intelligence and piety emanate from that humble source?

I will not say that as soon as the settler has a roof over his head

* The Seven Lamps of Architecture.

he thinks of a schoolhouse in which public meetings may be held, for in truth he ascertains the probability of such a building before he selects a site for his homestead. As soon as a tree is felled, a schoolhouse is thought of, and the whole neighborhood are at once, and for once, of one accord in erecting it. It is a rough enough thing when it is done, for your backwoodsman looks only to the main point in everything, and dreams not of superfluity. He means that the roof shall shed rain, and the piled sides keep the wind out, and the floor afford dry footing. He puts in windows for light, and benches to sit upon, and a pulpit or rostrum from which a speaker may be well heard. Then there is a great stove for the long winter, and sometimes,—not always, unfortunately,—some shelter for waiting steeds. But a thought of symmetry, of smoothing, of decoration—never intrudes. Architecture, which begins after every purpose of mere use in a building is provided for, is out of the question here. Whoever would admire the log schoolhouse, must bring the beauty in his own mind.

Yet it is hardly fair to say so, either. Letting the inside go, with its cave-like roughness, the outer aspect is not altogether devoid of the beauty which the artist loves. As to color, nothing can be finer, after a year's mellowing. When the tender spring green clothes the trees around it, its rich brown and gray earthy tints make the most delicious harmony, and its undulating outlines no discord. If log houses have not yet come well into pictures, it is because no artistic imagination has yet been warmed by them. I remember one, in a picture of Cole's, but it was the poorest, nakedest thing that could be, more literal than reality itself. It was as different from the true—i. e. the ideal log house—as a builder's draught of the Parthenon from a Raffaelesque picture of it. Such cold correctness is death to typical beauty, for it does not recognize

a soul in the inanimate. The painter had only seen log houses, he had never felt them, as he had the woods and waters that he painted so well. A Daguerreotype representation of a log house would be, to all intents and purposes, a libel, for every tint of earth and sky has peculiar business in a true picture of this characteristic and interesting object in western scenery. Ruskin talks of Paul Veronese's painting, not, like Landseer, a dog 'wrought out with exquisite dexterity of handling, and minute attention to all the accidents of curl and gloss which can give appearance of reality, while the hue and power of the sunshine, &c., are utterly neglected' —but the 'essence of dog;' now we want a painter who can give us the essence of log house, and particularly of log schoolhouse, or we would as soon see a wood-pile painted. That the Swiss chalet should have proved more inspiring to American painters, shows the blinding power of prejudice, or the illusion of strangeness; though, to be sure, we have not Alps to tower above our primal edifices.

The enmity felt by the backwoodsman against trees too often exhibits itself in the vicinity of the schoolhouse, which ought to be shaded in summer, and shielded in winter by the ponderous trunks and green embracing arms in the midst of which it generally stands. But, accepting literally the poet's idea—'the groves were God's first temples,' we cut down the grove to make our temple, yet inconsistently 'clear' the space about it, partly for the sake of the necessary fuel, partly to make the place look civilized! It is hard to get a few trees left for the children to sit under in the summer noon-spell. There is a savage rudeness in this, but it is in accordance with the leading idea of 'subduing' the country, and there is no surer way of putting a western settler in a passion, than talking to him about sparing a few trees, for any purpose. He will

plant them, perhaps, but he will never consent to leave them standing where nature placed them. When he sits in the schoolhouse on Sunday, listening to the sermon with his ears, while his mind, perhaps, strays off into that unseen which the week's cares and toils are apt to banish, or finds itself still entangled in those cares and toils, he loves to look through the windows, or the chinks, at the distant woods. Distant, they please and soothe him; he feels, if he does not hear, their soft music; he sees their gentle waving, and appreciates in some degree the power of their beauty; but near, the association is unpleasant. His hands yet ache with the week's chopping, which must be forgotten that Sunday may be Sunday; and the vicinity of huge trunks is suggestive only of labor. A wide bare space about the building has, to his imagination, the dignity of a field of triumph. It seems to afford sanction to the Sabbath repose.

Within, neither paint nor plaster interferes with the impression of absolute rusticity. Desks of the rudest form line the sides, making a hollow oblong, in the middle of which stands the stove, surrounded by low, long benches for the little ones. On week-days these are filled with pinafored urchins, who sit most of the time gazing at the pieces of sky they can discern through the high windows, or playing with bits of stick or straw, too insignificant to attract the keen, stern eye of the master, who would at once pounce upon a button or a marble. One by one these minims are called up to be alphabetized, or spell '*c-a-t*, pussy,' in the picture-book. Spelling and arithmetic are decidedly the favorite studies in most district schools; writing is troublesome, and reading is expected to come by nature. A half wild, half plaintive sound fills the ear, the sound of recitation, which is generally an irksome business on both sides, the teacher too often conscious of utter incompetency and

hating the task, the pupil feeling the incompetency of the teacher, at least enough to be certain that he himself is in hopeless circumstances as far as 'book-larnin' is concerned. Girls and boys usually wear an equally sad countenance, for there is too wide a chasm between the home occupations and those of the school-room, to allow any familiarity with the themes of the latter. With the greater part of the scholars it is such up-hill work, that both they and their parents deserve much credit for persisting in efforts, the result of which is distant, at least, if not uncertain. A few happy, bright spirits flash out in spite of the dull influences, and they are apt to absorb the attention of the teacher, leaving still less hope for the unready.

The disciplinary part has reference only to behavior, delinquency in lessons being a fault which the teacher is usually too honest or too sympathetic to visit with much severity. High offences are biting apples, rattling nuts or marbles, singing, whistling, making faces, pinching and scratching. Cutting the desks and benches is nominally an offence, bnt not often punished, because it can be done without noise; once in a while, however, a confiscated knife diversifies the row of nuts and apples on the teacher's desk. Modes of punishment are ingeniously varied. To be put on the boys' side is a terrible one for the little girls; to hold up a slate, formidable to either sex. Standing upon the bench, or, in summer, on the stove, is equal to the pillory, especially when, as is sometimes practised, the whole school is enjoined to point the finger at the delinquent. Minor transgressions are occasionally atoned for by wearing a piece of split quill on the top of the ear, or across the bridge of the nose, saddle-wise; or carrying pinned to the back or shoulder, a piece of paper, on which a significant word is written. The rod is the last resource, unless the teacher gets a dislike to some unlucky boy,

whose smallest fault ever after looms large on his jaundiced eye. As it is conscious weakness that instinctively has recourse to force, it might naturally be expected that female teachers would be fondest of the use of the rod, and experience proves the fact. It serves as a substitute for the mental power which commands respect. The master's brow being by nature more terrible, he can afford to reserve flagellation for great occasions.

If the absolute knowledge acquired under these circumstances could be ascertained, its amount would probably be so small as to seem disproportioned even to these simple means. But there are a thousand indirect advantages, both to children and parents, which make themselves evident in due season, so that the difference between children who go to school and those who do not, is as patent as if the teachers were Dr. Arnolds and Hannah Mores. This general result is all that the farmer expects or wishes; he is, on the whole, rather prejudiced against books, like other uneducated people. We lately heard an intelligent Russian say, that children are sent to the public schools in Russia because the Emperor wishes it; the parents saying that they consider what is learned, beyond counting and signing one's name, rather a disadvantage than a good. The rough, hard-working American forms the same estimate; and this is the less to be wondered at, when we see highly instructed people, who may be supposed to have full knowledge of the benefits of cultivation, adopting these unenlightened sentiments. It will hardly be believed that men, not only of education but of learning, once transplanted to the woods, and forced into the hard struggle for the ordinary comforts of life which occupies both head and hands there, are found to let their children grow up without even the cultivation within their reach; so that among the most boorish of western youth, we see the sons and daughters of those who possess the

power of imparting the best instruction. This is more particularly the case with transplanted Europeans, certainly, but it is not inapplicable to many of our own countrymen from the Eastern States.

Sunday—benign provision for the sanity, bodily and mental, of man, and the comfort of the kindly beasts—wears a marked aspect here where the labor of the week *is* labor, and where the difference in dress, occupation, thoughts, between the Sabbath and the working days, is as striking as that between the fairy as princess, and the fairy as cat. In town, we may have been harassed enough; anxious in business, weary with toilsome pleasure, exhausted with envious competition, faint with disappointed ambition; perhaps spent with unselfish efforts to do good, or prostrate through the grief of ill-success. But we know comparatively little of muscular toil, and its peculiar consequences upon the whole man, moral and physical. We go to church habitually; perhaps with devout motives, perhaps through listlessness; because others go; because we do not know what to do at home; we admire the preacher or somebody in the congregation; we have a pew and may as well use it; it is a good habit for children, or builds up our own character for steadiness. We do not put on our best clothes, because it is *vulgar*, and may lead to a suspicion that we have nowhere else to exhibit them; or from a better motive—a dislike to anything which may attract attention from the main and only legitimate object. In short our way of spending Sunday is like other things that we do, modified by our principles and circumstances. It has no general character, save that of outward decency; it tells nothing of the man, except that he has no desire to be singular.

But in the new country it is different. There, Sunday is something in itself, over and above the sacredness of the command to refrain from labor during its hours. It is a day of *rest*, emphatically;

and a day of cleanliness, and dress, and social congregation, and intellectual exercise; and perhaps of reading and reflection, such as the toilsome week-days do not encourage, even if they do not wholly prevent. There has been a general winding up of common affairs on Saturday. The oven has done double duty; and the churn has been used with vigor; the remains of the ironing have been finished —for our Western housewives do not adhere strictly to the good old custom of 'washing-day,' but wash as irregularly as they do almost everything else; so that the bushes may be seen weighed down with garments every day in the week, and sometimes even on Sunday. Everything that could be done beforehand has been attended to, and the bed-hour hastened a little, to make the most of the coveted repose. Sunday-morning breakfast is a little dilatory, and the hour or two after it is one of bustling preparation. The requisite offices about the house and farm are dispatched as summarily as may be; and the family—including old grandmother and baby and all—set off for church, after covering up the fire, and putting a fork over the latch—a precaution which makes it necessary for one of the boys to get out of a window. This is merely a hint to those who may call, that the family is absent; not to guard against thieves, since the windows are all unguarded. How much trouble is saved by having little to lose! 'Blessed be nothing!' we have often had reason to exclaim.

At church, the arrivals are various as to time; some liking to be in season—say an hour before the service begins; others having too much to do at home to allow of the enjoyment of this precious interval of gossip. In winter, some good soul makes the fire, for it is nobody's business in particular; and stout young fellows bring in huge armfuls of wood, which they pile behind the stove. In summer, the men congregate on the shady side of the meeting-house,

and talk over the affairs of the week, the approaching election, or the price of wheat. The women converse in whispers, comparing household experiences, or recounting, in moving terms, cases of 'fits' or 'inward fever' in their own families or those of their neighbors. Those on whom is to devolve the burthen of the music, are intent on their singing-books, humming or softly whistling over new or only half-learned tunes, and comparing one with another. As there is not even a guess as to what hymns will be given out, nothing like general practice can be attempted; but there is so little leisure during the week, that the quiet, and ease, and clean fingers of Sunday seem to suggest music, as naturally as joy does; and a degree of attention and interest is excited which might be turned to excellent account if good instruction were at hand just at the right moment.

When the minister arrives, there is a momentary bustle, from resuming customary places and putting away the music-books. But soon all becomes solemn. The idea of cheerfulness and religion being compatible, never enters the head of one of those good people. A countenance not merely serious but sad, is considered the only proper one for the contemplation of religious ideas. This is certainly a great error, and one which tends to the further separation of religion from the affairs of common life, and the association of piety with death and sorrow, rather than with life and hope, joy and peace.

A very short intermission succeeds the morning service, and lunch is eaten on the spot by all members from a distance. The horses are looked to, and a little repose or a stroll in the grove is the preparation for a new session. This is of course a much more drowsy affair. Even the minister himself, who is hardly expected to be human, will be heavy-eyed, sometimes, under such a continuous

effort; and many of the hearers succumb entirely, giving audible tokens of complete forgetfulness of mortal things. Fortunately the babies generally sleep too, and the unlucky boys who let marbles drop on the floor in the morning, and the girls who *would* whisper in spite of frowns, feel the influence of the hour, and grow tame and good under it. Still the afternoon service is rather uphill work, and there is a general, though unconfessed feeling of relief when it is over, even among the best church-goers.

And now the Sunday is over, in fact, though not in form; since public worship is the marked portion of sacred time. Great stillness still prevails, however, even where a large portion of the population never go to church. No one is so abject as not to respect the day so far as outward appearance goes. There are those who think Sunday a choice day for gunning, because the woods are undisturbed by the sound of the axe; others who use the day for a general survey of the fields and fences; and others still who will toss hay or get in wheat, in spite of what they deem the prejudices of their neighbors. But there is no noise—no boasting or bravado. When these independent people say, 'It is a free country, and every man can do as he likes,' they do not claim the least right to interfere with a neighbor's freedom. That would not be tolerated in any one. There is a vast deal of free-thinking, and even what might be called a worse name, in matters of religion, at the West, but it is necessarily quiet; for public sentiment is decidedly against it, though that public sentiment is far from being just what it should be.

In the Sabbath exercises the parents take their own personal share of the log schoolhouse, and it is a beautiful sight to see them assemble; hard, knotty, rough, bashful, and solemn, all clean washed and dressed, though carrying the week's atmosphere of toil about them, even in their Sunday clothes. The sexes are divided, but sit

facing each other, and the low benches, on week-days appropriated to bread-and-milk scholars, are in meeting occupied by mothers, with babies and younglings who enjoy the benefit of the open space for manifold evolutions more amusing than edifying. There is a curious mixture of extreme formality and familiarity on these occasions. Countenances wear an unconscious and forbidding gravity, as husbands and wives, parents and children, beaux and belles, look each other full in the face across the house; but if a baby is troublesome, the father will go and take it from the mother, and returning gravely to his seat, toss it and play with it awhile and then carry it back again. Children go into the passage for a drink; dogs sit gazing up at the preacher, and fall asleep like Christians if the day is warm; the speaker stops sometimes to give directions about matters that need attention, or even points his sermon directly at some individual whose connection with it is well known.

We remember an occasion when the preacher began his discourse by a considerable dissertation on controversy, declaring his dislike to it, and appealing to his auditors for confirmation of his assertion that he had always avoided it. After spending some fifteen minutes on this topic, he announced that he had been requested by a person then present to preach from a certain text, which he forthwith read, and appealed to the person by name, as to whether it was the text he meant. An affirmative answer having been given by a deep bass voice in a far corner, the speaker read some twenty verses by way of context, adding that if any person present wished him to read more he would do so, and upon request he proceeded to read several verses more. Now preparing seriously for the work, by coughing, etc., he drew the attention of his hearers by saying that there were only two kinds of *isms* that he contended with—devilism and manism; but that if the gentleman who had selected the

text found Universalism in it, he was willing, for truth's sake, to show him his error. He thought some people present would open their eyes, when they found how little of that doctrine the passage in question really contained. He did not mean to back up his text with other portions of Scripture; it could stand on its own legs. He came 'neither to criticise, ridicule, or blackguard anybody,' but thought he was right, and was willing to be shown if he was wrong. About half an hour had now elapsed, yet the sermon was not fairly begun. There was plenty of time yet, however, for he went on more than an hour longer, warming with a feeling of success, and ever and anon casting triumphant glances at the corner where sat his opponents, as he felt that he had given a home thrust to their theological errors. This sermon was much praised, and pronounced by the schoolmaster of the day the most powerful discourse he had ever heard.

This sketch, however, represents an individual, not a class. Ambition is not the pulpit vice of the woods, and sermons are usually of the hortatory character, delivered with great fervor. It must be confessed that doctrinal sermons win the most respect, and are most talked about; exhortation is deemed commonplace in comparison—mere milk for babes. A sermon on original sin, which asserted that infants of a day might be damned, and that souls in blessedness would be able to rejoice over the eternal misery of those they loved best, because it vindicated Almighty justice, gave great, though perhaps not general satisfaction. 'Ah! wasn't it elegant!' we heard a good woman say, coming out; 'I haven't heard such a sermon since I came from the East!'

The public taste turning thus toward knotty points of divinity, the preachers, whose employment depends upon their acceptableness, naturally make polemics a large part of their little reading—an

unhappy result, considering the very little good likely to be accomplished among uninstructed people by controversial preaching. The pulpit is the most efficient instructor of the people, on other subjects besides religion, and the advance in general intelligence must depend very much upon the competency of those who undertake the dispensation of ethical truth. It is therefore greatly to be desired that knowledge should be added to zeal, in those who go westward in the hope of doing good. Too many who go are deficient in both, and no one who has lived there will doubt that the harm done, directly and indirectly, by such, is incalculable; but there is another class whose persuasions to religion, though honestly meant, lead only to superstition and outward observance, too common everywhere, but especially destructive in their influence on true piety in unenlightened communities. A considerable portion of the religious teachers who officiate, self-elected, in the western wilds, are behind those they teach in general intelligence, and not much above them in familiarity with religious topics, though they may possess a great flow of words, which pass for signs of ideas, but are not such, as it regards either party. Some sermons are mere strings of Scriptural phrases and well-known texts, often curiously wrenched from their authorized meaning to favor the purpose of the hour. The idea on these occasions seems to be, that the people are to be touched, moved, excited, frightened, or persuaded into an interest in religion, by any and every means that the Scriptures afford, and that with so good a purpose it is lawful to *make* them afford whatever may promise to be effectual. Griesbach and Rosenmüller would stare at some of the glosses of our zealous preachers, and the learned Rabbi who has been lecturing among us would find his metaphysics outdone in subtilty, by certain constructions of the Old Testament

histories, which read with such grave simplicity and directness to the unlearned.

With all deductions, however, an immense amount of good is done in various ways. Even when the preacher is deficient, the hearers extract good in some shape from his blind teaching; that is to say, seeking for good, they find it whether it is brought them or not. Who can reckon the value of the rest, the change of thought, the neat dress, the quiet, the holy associations, which the Sabbath day brings with it in the country! The best touchstone of valuable citizenship is found in the log schoolhouse. He who feels no interest in that, feels none in anything that concerns the welfare of the community.

The Sunday-school is one of the most interesting of all the occupations of the school house, but it would require the graphic power of a Hogarth to describe it worthily. As there is no rod, and no authority but one founded on sentiment, the erratic genius of the West has full scope. The youth who would on week-days tell his teacher—'Scoldin' don't hurt none—whippin' don't last long—and kill me *you darsn't!*' would not probably be very lamblike under the instructions of the Sabbath; and the very proposition to teach for love, and not for money, puts every one on his guard. They cannot exactly see the trap, but they are pretty sure there is one! Something very like bribery is necessary, in order to secure the attendance of the class of scholars whom it is most desirable to persuade—the children of parents who do not frequent the schoolhouse. Some of these hardly know the Bible by name, and others have heard it only scoffed at. But religious teaching often exerts a wonderful power even over such, and they are apt to be converted to a faith in disinterested benevolence at least. The labor of teaching them is quite equal to that required for teaching in Ceylon, ac-

cording to Dr. Poor; and the good missionary's whole description of the mission schools in that far land, reminded me very much of certain western experiences.

Besides the uses we have mentioned, the schoolhouse is the theatre of the singing-school, so dear to country beaux and belles; of the spelling-school, as exciting as a vaudeville; of all sorts of shows and lectures, expositions and orations. Even the ceremonies of the Catholic Church are found possible within those rude walls, and incense has won its way to the sky through the chinks of warped oak shingles. The most numerous sects are the Baptists and Methodists; but there is hardly one unrepresented. We remember a Quaker sermon on a certain occasion, which produced perhaps as great a sensation as any doctrinal discourse of them all, though it partook very little of theology.

We had occasionally met for public worship, in a lonely schoolhouse on the border of the forest, where two roads crossed, and where, in winter, a flooring of chips showed that the seekers after learning were not behindhand in consuming the woods as fast as their great stove would assist them. This primitive temple, with its notched desks and gashed benches, was used in turn by religionists of every shade of belief and no belief; even the Mormons had expounded their Golden Bible (by some of the neighbors believed to have been typified by the Golden Calf which led the people astray in old times), from its crazy platform, and a rough-looking gentleman in a plaid neckcloth had, during a whole evening, thumped the teacher's desk till it quivered again, in his endeavors to prove all religion a device for the better subjection of the people. A Sunday-school had been maintained here for some time, at no small cost to the good laymen who conducted it; for they were obliged, in winter, to precede their scholars by at least an hour, and make the fire and

arrange the room, lest some petty discomfort should prove an excuse for absence on the part of those whom they were most desirous of benefiting. Here, too, were singing-schools held, and spelling-schools, and other solemnities requiring space and benches; and the log schoolhouse, spite of its rough aspect, was, as usual, a building in much request and high esteem.

There was no 'stated preaching' in it on Sundays, but clergymen of different denominations seemed to know by intuition or magnetism when it would be available, and their appointments dovetailed so nicely that its so-called pulpit was seldom unoccupied at the hours of divine service. Once only, within the memory of 'the oldest inhabitant,' did ten o'clock, Sunday morning, find the people assembled,—the wagons tied outside, with their seats turned down as a precaution against falling skies, and their patient steeds chewing 'post-meat' for recreation—and no preacher forthcoming. A sort of extempore, self-constituted deacon, after much solemn whispering with the grave-looking farmers who sat near him, gave out a hymn, which was sung with a sort of nervous slowness, and much looking at the door. A restless pause followed, and then the deacon gave out another hymn, in six verses, with a repeat; this occupied a convenient portion of time, and then came another fidgety silence, during which, some of the lighter members slipped out, and several of the children went to the pail outside the door for a drink. The deacon then offered to read a chapter, and proposed, if the clergyman did not arrive in that time, that some of the brethren should 'make a few remarks.' The chapter was read, and the remarks duly invited; but this only made the silence deeper; indeed, it was such that you might have heard a pin drop.

Nobody belonging to the town seemed to have anything on his mind, and after a little pause, there were evident symptoms of a

natural dissolution of the meeting; when a Quakeress, who was on a visit in the neighborhood, laid aside her close bonnet, and standing up, presented to the view of the assembly a fair and calm face, on which sat the holy smile of Christian love and confidence. All was hushed, for such a look has an irresistible charm.

'My friends,' she began, with a sweet solemn tone, between entreaty and reproof, 'since you are disappointed with regard to your minister, perhaps you will be willing to hear a few words from one who, though personally a stranger, feels a true interest in you, and who would fain help you forward, even ever so little, in the religious life. Your desire to have the gospel preached to you, shows that you are, at least in some measure, seeking that life, and my mind has been drawn towards you as I observed the dependence you seemed to feel on the ministrations of the person expected. It has certainly seemed strange to me that so much uneasiness and commotion should have been occasioned by the failure of a particular person to conduct your worship. 'God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit.' Now you, every one of you, brought with you to this house this morning a spirit, in and by which alone you can worship acceptably. You have here before you the book containing the revealed word, in which you could find wherewithal to direct and govern your thoughts on this occasion; why then should the absence of any mere man interfere with your purpose of worship, and leave your minds unquiet and your thoughts wandering?'

Thus the gentle monitor opened her truly extempore sermon, and, passing from one topic to another as she proceeded with her remonstrance, she touched on many points of scripture and practical religion, until her audience forgot their disappointment, or remembered it only to rejoice at it. The prejudice against a woman's pretending

to teach in public, though peculiarly strong among coarse and unlettered people, melted before the feminine grace and modesty with which the speaker was so largely endowed; and when she finished, and resumed her seat and her bonnet, there were few present who would not gladly have agreed to hear her every Sunday. How they would have relished her silence, or whether her arguments had done anything towards convincing them that the heart may worship though no word be spoken, we can only conjecture; for before another Sabbath, the persuasive eye and voice had departed on some mission to the farther West, and we never again enjoyed her ministry of love in The Log Schoolhouse.

## STANDARDS.

We need standards. Not such as are wont to be presented by fine ladies in balconies to glittering crowds below, where plumes wave and steel flashes in the sunshine, while the vulgar, dazzled with the pretty pageant, rend the air with their 'most sweet voices.' Not such standards as these do we lack; would they were fewer!

By the way, is it not a strange thing that woman, who was sent into the world to be an angel of peace and mercy, should have lent herself to such things? that she should ever have been persuaded to become the tool of the ambitious and the revengeful? that her hand should have been trained to endue the knight's death-dealing sword; to buckle on his heel those silver cruelties called spurs; and to place in his steeled grasp the lance whose best aim was to be the life-blood of fathers, and brothers, and husbands? Does she not shoot madly from her sphere when she lends the power of her presence to the public baptism of a silken banner, whose inscription is cunningly devised for the promotion of ghastly death? Oh that these beautiful emblems of horror, these gilded toys significant of deepest woe,—of poverty, of widowoood, of despair,—were wont to change their delusive seeming for their true character, even as they pass from the

hand of the fair giver to that of the tinselled warrior! For crimson and gold, for gleaming white and delicate azure, we should then behold the fell traces of a 'heady fight;' black powder-stains, huge rents, showing the path of hostile bullets; and over all and through all, a plentiful sprinkling of human gore; perhaps the heart-blood of the poor ensign whose duty it is to pour out his life in defence of the costly rag. Methinks one such disenchanting revelation would suffice for the woman of one generation at least.

But whither am I wandering? All I set out to say was, that we are in daily want of standards suited to the considerate, prodigal, ambitious, economical, and particularly the moralizing habits of this utilitarian age; standards of propriety, standards of expense, and of many other things which are brought into daily discussion in our times. Here, in our country, where we boast that none of us have any body to look up to, while we are every one looking up to somebody, it seems to be peculiarly difficult to determine just how far each ought to go in certain matters; what proportion should be observed in our expenditures; and how much pretension we are entitled to, whether in dress, furniture, or style of living. At least half the scandal of our coteries derives its zest from the debateable nature of these important points. If any one would be kind and ingenious enough to devise a sliding-scale whose register should decide these things, he would be much better entitled to the national thanks than ever was the great inventor of that corn-screw to the gratitude of the grain-growers of England. We need some tallisman to put a check upon these ceaseless inquisitions, and imputations, and calculations, all undertaken for the sole benefit of our neighbors. If we must, as a people, be idolaters of the physical and the outward, let us have our grounds of worship and our grades of ministration settled definitely, that the land may have rest.

What an edifying conversation ensues when Mrs. Angle sets the ball rolling by a remark touching the table-habits of the Dashwoods!

'Can you believe that people who live in so splendid a house, with satin-damask hangings and all manner of show, dine off a cotton table-cloth, and without even napkins?'

'Believe it! certainly,' says a hum-drum looking person in the corner, whose appearance would be entirely insignificant were it not for a pair of peering eyes, which show that she is to be dreaded as a visiter at least; 'believe it! I can believe any thing, for I caught them sitting down to a shoulder of mutton, with the water it had been boiled in served up for soup;'

'How came you to call at dinner-time?' asks a simple-minded country lady.

'O! I went late on purpose, and made the servant believe I was a person on business, just to see how they *did* live, for I knew that people who cut the figure they do must pinch somewhere.'

'As to that,' remarks a prim-lipped damsel, with very bony hands '*I* saw Mrs. Dashwood put a sixpence into the plate last Sunday. I declare I thought her fat fingers blushed as they did it? They looked red enough, I'm sure!'

Poor Mrs. Dashwood! Yet she has her revenge, for she is at this very moment telling one of her neighbors, whose ideas of style correspond more nearly with her own, what *she* thinks of the airs of Mrs. Angle 'and *that* set,' who, living in small houses with 'really common furniture,' yet affect not only napkins but silver forks and finger-glasses!

Mrs. Pensile is a serious lady, a pattern-woman; but she means to maintain her reputation and satisfy her conscience by just as little self-denial as will answer the purpose. She will be careful not to

give up any thing that is not absolutely inconsistent with her profession of sobriety. She sometimes indulges in expenses which she feels to be scarcely in keeping with her theories, but she is always able to come off triumphant by proving to you that one of the neighbors, who makes a still higher profession, goes farther that she ever does.

'It does really hurt my feelings,' says Mrs. Pensile, 'to see Miss Evergreen, who is a member of our church, wear a shawl that cost her, to my certain knowledge, three hundred dollars.'

'But Miss Evergreen is a woman of fortune, and has nobody to provide for.'

'True; but it *does* seem to me that there is *some* limit to the expenses in which serious people may lawfully indulge! My shawl now cost but ninety dollars, and I am sure it is as good as anybody *ought* to want?'

The visiter who has assented to this proposition goes off to her own coterie, and there gives vent to the 'exercise' of her mind by telling Mrs Pensile's idea of a standard for shawls.

'To think that woman actually takes credit to herself because she wears a shawl that cost *only* ninety dollars! I rather think if she would look round her own church, she would see many people whose wardrobe needs very much the aid of a part of the money! For my part, my best shawl cost scarcely half as much, and even that went against *my* conscience!'

Upon this a certain lady whispers to her companion on the sofa, at the same time looking very hard at the last speaker:

'That is a good deal more than you ought to afford, Madam, on my certain knowledge! Do you know, Mrs. Burn, that that lady's husband is my husband's partner, and I never think of giving over twenty dollars for a shawl. There's my *broché* cost but eighteen.'

'And after all,' says an ancient dame who overhears her, 'my good Paisley tartan, which cost but five, is warmer than either, and looks as well as anybody need wish, if it were not for pride.'

Now if it were supposable that one of our thrifty, tidy western housewives could be present at so refined a colloquy, she might cap the climax by adding:

'If you would all do as I do, make comfortable wadded mantillas out of your old dresses, for yourselves and your children, you would have more money to pay your husband's debts with, and something to give to the poor beside. Mine is made of the skirt of my wedding-gown, and cost me nothing but the batting and the quilting!'

Who shall draw the line for these good ladies?

Miss Long, during a stroll up Broadway, late on a pleasant afternoon, happens to see Miss Hauton trip daintily down her father's marble steps to the carriage which is to convey her to a dinner-party. It is but a glimpse, yet Miss Long had time to take an inventory of Miss Hauton's decorations. The hair was elegantly dressed; the robe, of the latest Parisian make and the most exquisite delicacy of color, and the satin shoe and the splendid *mouchoir* completed a costume which would have been pronounced faultless by the best judges, and which Miss Long secretly decides to be 'perfectly angelic!' From this moment she never rests until she has persuaded her indulgent papa to allow her an outfit as nearly like Miss Hauton's as possible. But Miss Long is not invited to dinner-parties, nor does her papa keep a carriage; what then shall she do with her beautiful new dress and its accompaniments? She wears them to walk the streets and make morning visits. Mrs. Sharp, after bowing out Miss Long, turns to her daughter with a compassionate smile, and the remark:

'What a pity that poor girl will make herself ridiculous by dressing so conspicuously in the streets!'

Miss Long has no conception of anything like propriety in dress. With her, dress is dress, be time and place what they may. She has been accustomed to think that a gingham wrapper, or perhaps something not so neat, is quite 'good enough' for a morning at home; but there her distinctive perceptions of proprieties in costume are at an end. The idea of a 'beauty of fitness' in dress or anything else, has never been presented to her mind.

A lady of clear understanding but no particular accuracy of expression happens to observe to her friend: 'Your daughter is just now at the right age to begin music.'

'Don't you think she's rather young?'

'No; it is the best time for whatever depends much on habit or requires manual dexterity. Beside, her time is worth nothing for any other pursuit.'

The friend looks up from her worsted-work in horror. 'Time worth nothing! You surprise me! I consider time a sacred trust.'

'Oh, certainly; but comparatively, I mean; there is very little use in urging books at so early an age.'

'Time worth nothing!' pursues the moralizing dame, who has got hold of a fruitful topic; 'that is the last sentiment I should have expected from a woman of your principles! I look upon even a little girl's time as very valuable. I am teaching Viola to sew. I consider sewing much more necessary than music. A woman who does not know the use of her needle is good for nothing. You've no idea how beautifully Viola can work already! Here is a pair of *manchettes* she is finishing for me; look at the lace-work. By the way, have you seen my new collar? Mrs. Taft says she could not

distinguish it from Paris embroidery. Indeed, I stole the pattern from a French one. And there are my ottomans, just come home; beautifully mounted, are they not? The unconscionable wretch charged me forty dollars for that mounting. But they ought to be handsomely set, when I have bestowed so much labor upon them. I worked at them five weeks, and we had company part of the time too, so that I could not work *all* the time.' The friend takes the opportunity of a pause, to observe politely: 'I cannot imagine how you find time for so much!'

Oh! it is by making use of every moment. I never allow myself to be idle. I keep this screen-frame at hand, so that while I am receiving calls I may be busy.' And, full of self-approval, the lady continues her devotion to the embroidered screen, wondering how so sensible a woman as Mrs. —— could say that even a child's time is worth nothing.

Mr. Howard, a city merchant, finding business unprosperous, through the changefulness of the times or the failure of some correspondent, resolves to retire while it is yet time; and wishing to alter his style of living, thinks he can do it with smaller sacrifice of feeling if he change his place of residence and his plan of life. He has always had, like many of his city brethren, a green dream floating far away in the back-ground of his imagination; an incipient calenture, under the influence of which fields and forests have looked particularly enticing to his mind's eye. Now is the time to try this new spring of happiness. So he follows his friend Allbright into the country, and buys a farm, and hires a farmer to manage it for him, as Allbright has done. But Allbright is of a quiet turn, and fonder of reading than anything else; and Howard is a person of overflowing activity, who cares nothing for books, and whatever he may suppose, really loves only society and bustle.

During the first month after the effort and turmoil of becoming settled in a new residence are over, Howard yawns and stretches until dislocation seems inevitable. But harvest is approaching, and then there will be some stir, and Howard suspends his judgment of rural life until then. Harvest begins, and all is animation; and Howard walks about the fields, with his hands in his pockets, until he begins to long to be busy too. After two or three days, looking on has lost its charm, and he resolves to try his hand at this new form of energy. He works furiously for a day or two, quite flattered that the men declare he does his share and more. And then one morning he wakes up with a fever. After a tolerable seasoning, he quietly moves his forces townward again, being thoroughly convinced that ruralizing is not his forte. He had judged himself by his friend, when in fact no two can be more different. He resolves to face manfully his altered style of living, and with conscious honesty to sustain his self-respect, he finds the world's dread eye not half so terrible as he thought it.

The Reverend Doctor Deal, pastor of a city congregation, with a large salary and only two sons, not only sends his boys to the most expensive colleges, but allows them private instruction from the best masters, to fit them for the arena. The good Doctor has been heard to remark, with a disapprobation not unmixed with contempt, upon the absurdity of his friend Mr. Berrington's attempting, with his family, to send his sons to college.

Now Mr. Berrington, a member of Dr. Deal's church, and no illiberal contributor to the large salary above-mentioned, is a salaried man too, but his income is not so good as the Doctor's, and he has, moreover, six sons instead of two. Yet he feels that his position in society, his connections, his own education and habits, all make it very desirable that his sons should be liberally educated.

Charles, the eldest, has mastered the school-course, and is very anxious to go to college with his young companions. The father, after much deliberation and some misgiving, concludes that the attempt must be made. It is only choosing a college where expenses are moderate, retrenching a little at home, and enjoining strict economy upon Charles; and he will be nearly through college before John's turn comes. Charles leaves home with heroic resolutions of hard study; then goes to college, and does as most other boys do. Retrenchments at home are trying, and Mr. Berrington has almost resolved against another so inconvenient attempt. But John, who is of a more quiet turn than his brother, makes so many fair promises, and seems so likely to keep them, and Charles, under pain of his father's displeasure, takes hold of his studies so manfully at last—and comes off with the honors—that John is, after all, allowed to take his brother's place when Charles is put into a law-office to learn his profession. And this is the history of some three or four of the elder sons, until Charles, having set up for himself, finds that he has a great many competitors. The next tries medicine, but finds it hard to make bread of calomel. The next—we will not, even for a supposition, say that out of the whole six one takes to the Church as a mere livelihood,—the next, we may find teaching in some school or college, and he continues poor, almost of course. One has some talent as an artist, and he makes a support, though it is a slender one. Another thinks this being a poor gentleman is but a poor business after all, and he resolves to try farming. But the education of his father and brothers is against him. He feels so painful a distinction between himself and the rest, that his courage fails, and he studies a profession after all. It is not until the youngest has witnessed the struggles of pride and poverty and pangs of 'hope deferred,' wearing the very life out of the whole

family, that he resolves upon a more manly course. He is regularly apprenticed to an architect; learns the business thoroughly, and has during his time of service the advantage which may be enjoyed in many other branches of business, a constant familiarity with objects of taste and refinement. He has also the advantage of a means of living which is referable to rules, and can be judged of with certainty. He thrives, marries, lives respectably, and is happy. His brothers have an air, when speaking of him, as if he had rather lost *caste*, yet they are not averse to borrowing money of him *sub rosa*, and their unprosperous condition proves no small drawback upon his comfort. He has chosen one of many professions which, though connected with mechanical effort, do not necessarily imply any lack of intellectual culture or social refinement; and he has secured competence, peace, ability to assist others, in place of that grinding poverty which is imbittered by a constant effort at concealment, and that close application of every dollar to purposes connected with *appearance*, which allows nothing to spare in any emergency; a condition more inevitably *belittling* (if we may be allowed the use of a kitchen word in a utilitarian discussion) than any mechanical employment, stitching not excepted.

Do we not need standards sadly? Or is it only a little more self-reliance, self-recollection, self-respect? a more distinct perception of our true interest and dignity? a clear-sighted preference of reality to mere appearance, of the inward to the outward? Something is lacking, certainly; and the inquiry is worth making—'*What is it?*'

## SKETCH OF A CASE;

### OR A PHYSICIAN EXTRAORDINARY.

Doctor R—— sat alone in his study when a lady was announced.

"Mrs. Waldorf, sir," and the doctor laid down his pen and recieved his visiter very cordially. She was the wife of a rich German merchant, and a distant cousin of his own ; a handsome woman of about five and thirty, with sufficient repose of manner, but too spirited an eye to pass for a mere fashionable machine.

"I have come to you, doctor, instead of sending for you," began the lady, "because I do not wish Mr. Waldorf to know I have thought it necessary to consult you. He is so easily alarmed, and if he knew you had prescribed for me would watch me so closely and insist so much upon my observance of your directions to the very letter, that I should have no peace."

The doctor smiled, as if he thought Mr. Waldorf would not be so far wrong as his lady might suppose.

"But what is it, my dear madam ?" he said, taking Mrs. Waldorf's hand and giving a look of professional scrutiny to her face. "You look well, though there is a slight flaccidity about the eyes, and not quite so ruby a nether lip as one might wish to see. What is it ?"

"Oh ! a thousand things, doctor ; my health is miserable—at least

I sometimes think so; I have pains in the right side—and such flutterings at my heart—and such lassitude—and such headaches—and sleep so miserably—"

"Are your pains very severe? are they of a heavy, dull kind, or sharp and darting? and how often do you experience them?"

"They are not very constant—no, not constant, certainly, nor very severe—but, doctor, they fill me with apprehensions of future evil. It is not present suffering of which I complain, so much as a fear of worse to come. I dread lest disease should make such progress, unnoticed, that it will be vain to attempt a cure." And Mrs. Waldorf's eyes filled with tears at the very thought of her troubles.

"You are wise to take it in time," said Doctor R——. "But tell me more of these symptoms. At what time of the day do you generally feel most indisposed?"

"Oh! I can scarcely say. When I wake in the morning, I am always very miserable. My head is full of dull pain, especially about the eyes. My lips are parched; I find it a great exertion to dress myself, and never have the slightest appetite for breakfast."

'Ah! indeed!' mused the doctor, 'you breakfast as soon as you arise, I presume. At what hour do you retire?'

'We make it a rule to be in bed by twelve, unless we happen to be engaged out, which is but seldom. Waldorf detests parties and late hours. We spend our evenings with music or books, very quietly.'

'At what hour do you sup?'

'We have nothing like a regular supper, but for mere sociality's sake we have a tray brought up about ten. I take nothing beyond a bit of chicken or a few oysters, or a slice of cake, and sometimes only a cracker and a glass of wine. You look as if you thought even this were better omitted; but I should scarcely know how to

cut off one of my husband's few social pleasures. He would touch nothing if I did not partake with him. He thinks as ill of suppers as you do.'

'I beg your pardon—I interrupted your detail of symptoms to ask these questions as to the evening. You say you have no appetite for breakfast—how long do these feelings of languor and exhaustion continue to trouble you?'

'Oh! I generally feel better after a cup of coffee; and after practising at the harp or the piano-forte for an hour or two, or sometimes three when I have new music, I generally drive out, and perhaps shop a little, or at any rate take a turn into the country for the air, and usually return somewhat refreshed.'

'Do you take your airings alone?'

'Yes—perforce, almost. There are none of my intimate friends who can go with me. They drive out regularly, and take children with them, or they have other objects; one cannot ask a mere acquaintance, so I go alone, which is not very exhilarating.'

'Your own children are not at home?'

'No—if they were, I should need no other company for the carriage. The society of young people is pleasant to me, but Adelaide is at Madame ——'s and Ernest is with a German clergyman, a friend of his father's. I fancy my rides would be of much greater service to me if I had a pleasant companion or two.'

'Undoubtedly—and I know a lady and her daughter to whom a regular morning airing with such society as that of Mrs. Waldorf would be the very breath of life! What a pity that etiquette comes in the way of so many good things? But go on, I beg.'

'Etiquette! say not another word, doctor—who and where are these friends or patients of yours? I should be happy if I could

offer any service. I will call with you on them this very day if you like, and invite them to ride with me daily.'

'Thank you a thousand times, my dear madam,' said Dr. R——, 'it is what I could not venture to ask. Yet I am not afraid you will not find my friends at least tolerably agreeable—but will you proceed with the account you were giving me of your daily habits—you dine at four, I believe?'

'That is our hour, but Mr. Waldorf is often detained until five, and I never dine without him. For my own part I should not care if dinner were stricken from the day. I lunch about one, and with tolerable appetite, and I never wish to eat again until supper time. We take tea, however at seven, and—'

'Green tea, I presume—do you take it strong?'

'Oh! not very, if I take it *too* strong I do not sleep at all.'

'You sleep but indifferently, you tell me?'

'Yes, generally; and wake many times in the night; sometimes in the horrors, so that I am full of undefinable fears, and dare not open my eyes lest the objects in the room should assume terrific shapes. The very shades cast by the night-lamp have power at such times to appal me.'

The doctor's professional inquiries extended to a still greater length, but he had guessed Mrs. Waldorf's complaint before he arrived at this point in the list. He had found solitude, inactivity, late hours, suppers, coffee, green tea, music and books—with not one counterbalancing item of that labor—effort—sacrifice—which has been affixed as the unchanging price of health and spirits. Mrs. Waldorf was one of the hundreds if not thousands of ladies in our land who walk through the world without ever discovering the secret of life. She had abundant wealth and a most indulgent husband, with all that this world can offer in point of comfort, and she

imagined that health alone was wanting to complete her happiness. Passive happiness! what a dream!

Doctor R—— was at the head of his profession, and he had some medicines at his command which are not known at the hospitals. He thought he could cure Mrs. Waldorf, but he hinted that he feared he should find her but a poor patient.

'You do not wish Mr. Waldorf to know you are under my care lest he should object to your neglecting my remedies—'

'Oh, indeed doctor, I shall be very faithful! Try me! You cannot prescribe anything too difficult. Shall I travel to the Pyramids barefoot, and live on bread and water all the way? I am only afraid Waldorf should insist upon my taking odious drugs, and—you know cautions meeting one at every turn are so tiresome!'

'Then you are willing to undertake any remedy which is not at all disagreeable, and which may be used or omitted *à discretion*—'

'No, no—indeed you mistake me. I only beg that it may not be *too* unpleasant. I will do just as you say.'

Mrs. Waldorf now had a fine color, and her eyes sparkled as of old. She had every confidence in the skill of Dr. R——, and the effort of recalling and recounting her symptoms had given an impetus to her thoughts and a quicker current to her blood.

The doctor apologized. He had an appointment and his hour had come.

'But before I leave you thus unceremoniously,' he said, 'it strikes me that there is a root in my garden which might be of essential service to you, to begin with at least. You know I have a little spot in which I cultivate a few rare botanical specimens. Might I venture to ask you to search for the root I speak of? It is in that little square compartment in the corner, which appears nearly vacant.'

'Oh, certainly—but had I not better call John, as your own man is going away with you?'

'John! Bless my soul, my dear Madam, there is not a John in the world that I would trust in my sanctum! No hand but mine, and that of a gardener whom I employ occasionally under my own direction, ever intrudes among my pets. Let me entreat you, since I have not another moment to spare, to take this little trowel and search with your own hands until you discover an oblong white root like this'—opening a book of botanical plants and exhibiting something that looked very much like a Jerusalem artichoke—'Take that and have it washed and grated into a gill of Port, of which try ten drops in a little water three times a day. I will see you again very soon—but now I must run away—' and Doctor R—— departed, leaving Mrs. Waldorf in musing mood.

She cast a look at the garden, which lay just beneath the window, full of flowers; then at the trowel—a strange implement in her hand. She thought Doctor R—— very odd, certainly, but she resolved to follow his directions implicitly. She went down stairs and was soon digging very zealously. Her glove was split by the first effort, of course; for a fashionably fitted glove admits not the free exercise of the muscles—but all was of no avail. Every corner of the little square was disturbed, but no talisman appeared. Weary at length of her new employment, Mrs. Waldorf gave up in despair, and sat down in a little arbor which offered its shade invitingly near her. Here she sank into a pleasant reverie, as one can scarcely help doing in a garden full of sweet flowers, and so pleasant was the sense of repose after labor, that she thought not of the lapse of time until she was startled by the voice of Doctor R——, returned from his visit and exceedingly surprised to find her still trowel in hand.

'Why, my dear Madam,' he exclaimed, 'you are forgetting your wish that Mr. Waldorf should not discover your visit to me! If he walks much in town he has had ample opportunity to observe his carriage at my door these two hours. You must learn to carry on clandestine affairs better than this! Have you the medicine?'

Mrs. Waldorf laughed and related her ill success, which the doctor very much regretted, although he did not offer to assist in the search.

'You are feeling tolerably well just now, I think,' he said; 'your color is better than when you came in the morning.'

'Oh yes! much better just now! But how charming your garden is! I do not wonder that you make a pet of it. We too have a few square inches of garden, but it gives me but little pleasure, because I have never done anything to it myself. I think I shall get a trowel of my own.'

'You delight me! You have only to cultivate and bring to perfection a single bed of carnations, to become as great an enthusiast as myself. But it must be done by your own hands—'

'Yes, certainly; but now I must be gone. To-morrow I will hold myself in readiness to call on our friends at any hour you will appoint.'

'What say you to eleven? Would that be too barbarous? The air is worth a good deal more at eleven than at one.'

'At seven, if you like! Do not imagine me so very a slave to absurd fashions! I am determined you shall own me a reasonable woman yet.'

Mrs. Waldorf called from the carriage window—'You'll not forget to send the medicine, doctor?'

'Certainly not! you shall have it at seven this evening, and I trust you will take it with exact regularity.'

'Do not fear me,' she said, and the doctor made his bow of adieu.

The medicine came at seven, with a sediment which looked not a little like grated potato, and without the slightest disagreeable taste. Accompanying directions required the disuse, for the present, of coffee and green tea; and recommended to Mrs. Waldorf a daily walk and a very early bed-hour.

The lady took her ten drops at nine, and felt so much better that she could not help telling her husband all about her visit to Doctor R——.

The next morning proved cloudy, and Mrs. Waldorf felt rather languid, but after her dose, found an improved appetite for breakfast. She sat down to her music, but looked frequently at the clouds and at her watch, thinking of her appointment. When the hour arrived the envious skies poured down such showers as will damp any body's ardor. The drive must be given up for that day, and it passed as usual, with only the interlude of the magic drops.

The next day was as bad, and the day after not a great deal better. Mrs. Waldorf's pains and palpitations almost discouraged her. She was quite sure she had a liver complaint. But on the fourth morning the sun rose gloriously, and the face of nature, clean washed, shone with renewed beauty. At eleven the carriage and the lady were at Doctor R——'s door.

'Have you courage to see an invalid—a sad sufferer?' said the doctor.

'Oh, certainly! I am an invalid myself, you know.'

'Ah! my dear lady, my invalid wears a different aspect! Yet I hope she is going to recover, and I shall trust to your humanity if the scene prove a sad one. Sickness of the mind was, I think, the origin of the evil, but it has almost overpowered the frail body.

This young lady and her mother have been giving lessons in music and in Italian, and have had but slender success in the whirl of competition. As nearly as I can discover, they came to this country hoping to find reverse of fortune easier to bear among strangers; and their course was determined hitherward in consequence of earlier family troubles which drove a son of Madame Vamiglia to America. He was a liberal, and both displeased his father and put himself in danger from government, by some unsuccessful attempt at home. The father is since dead, and the old lady and her daughter, left in poverty and loneliness, determined on following the young man to the new world. But here we are.'

And they stopped before a small house in a back street. Mrs. Waldorf was shown into a very humble parlor, while the doctor went to prepare his patient. He returned presently with Madame Vamiglia, a well-bred woman past middle age. She expressed her grateful sense of Mrs. Waldorf's kindness, but their communication was rather pantomimical, for the lady found her song-Italian of little service, and the signora had not much conversational English. However, with some French, and occasional aid from Doctor R——, their acquaintance was somewhat ripened before they went to the bedside of the sufferer. Mrs. Waldorf turned pale, and felt ready to faint, at the sight which presented itself.

There was a low, narrow couch in the centre of the room, scarce larger than an infant's crib, and on it lay what seemed a mere remnant of mortality. Large dark eyes, full of a sort of preternatural light, alone spoke of life and motion. The figure had been always extremely small, and was now wasted till it scarce lifted the light covering of the mattress. Madame Vamiglia went forward and spoke in a low tone to her daughter, and Mrs. Waldorf was glad to

sink into the chair set for her by Doctor R——. The ghastly appearance of the poor girl nearly overcame her.

The mother introduced her guest to her daughter, who could only look an acknowledgment; and then asked the doctor if he thought it possible that Ippolita could bear the motion of a carriage.

'She seems weaker to-day,' he replied; 'very weak indeed. Yet, if Mrs. Waldorf will allow the mattress to be put in, I think we may venture.'

Madame Vamiglia seemed full of anxiety lest the experiment should prove too much for the flickering remnant of life; but after much preparation, John was called, and the poor sufferer transferred, mattress and all, to the back seat. Mrs. Waldorf and her mother took the front, and in this way they drove slowly out towards the country.

At first the poor little signorina seemed exhausted almost unto death, and her mother watched her with the most agonized solicitude; but after a while she became accustomed to the gentle motion, and seemed revived by the fresh air. As the road wound through a green lane shaded with old trees, Ippolita looked about her with animation, and made a sign of pleasure with her wasted hand. Tears started to her mother's eyes, and she looked to Mrs. Waldorf for sympathy, and not in vain.

At length the invalid gave a sign, and they turned about. When they reached the lodging-house, Ippolita was in a quiet sleep, and they carried her back to her own room almost undisturbed.

'To-morrow at eleven!' whispered Mrs. Waldorf, at parting. Madame Vamiglia pressed her hand, but could not speak.

We need not describe the morning rides which succeeded this auspicious commencement. We need not trace step by step, the slow amendment of the young Italian, nor attempt to express, by

words, the gratitude of both mother and daughter. *They* felt words to be totally inadequate. We may mention, however, the rapid improvement of Mrs. Waldorf's health and spirits, which must of course be ascribed to that excellent medicine of Dr. R——'s. This enabled that lady to study Italian most strenuously, both at home and by familiar lessons from Madame Vamiglia and her daughter, during their prolonged excursions. This pursuit was never found to increase the palpitations, and seemed also a specific against headache.

Before Ippolita had so far recovered as to be independent of the daily airing, Mrs. Waldorf picked up a new object of interest. We say picked up, for it was a road-side acquaintance, and as Mrs. Waldorf has since observed, one which she never would have made if she had been reading during her drive, as was her custom formerly. She had, every morning for some time, observed a poor woman drawing a basket-wagon of curious construction, in which lay a child much larger than is usually found in such vehicles. The child was pretty, and tastefully, though plainly, drest; but the whole establishment bespoke anything but abundant means, so that Mrs. Waldorf was puzzled to make out the character of the group. The woman had not the air of a servant, and yet the child did not look as if it could be her child. In short, after seeing the same thing a dozen times, Mrs. Waldorf's curiosity was a good deal excited.

She did not, however, venture to make any inquiries until it so chanced that, in the very green lane we have spoken of—the favorite resort of the grateful Ippolita—they found the poor woman, with the child fainting in her arms. Grief and anxiety were painted on her honest face, and she was so absorbed in her efforts for the

recovery of the child that she scarcely answered Mrs. Waldorf's sympathizing inquiries.

'Oh don't trouble yourself, ma'am! It is nothing new! She's this way very often. It's the hoopin'-cough, ma'am; and I am afeard it'll be the death of her, poor lamb! in spite of all we can do!' And she tossed the child in the air, and fanned its face till the breath returned.

'Is it your own?' asked Mrs. Waldorf.

'No indeed, ma'am! mine are other guess lookin' children, thank God! This dear babe's mother is a delicate young lady that lives neighbor to me, as has a sick husband that she can't leave. I'm a washerwoman, ma'am, if you please, and I have to go quite away down town every day almost, and so I take this poor thing in my basket—it's large enough, you see—and so gives her a turn in the open air, 'cause the doctor says it's the open air, if anything that'll do her good.'

'You are very good,' said Mrs. Waldorf, who had listened in a kind of reverie, her thoughts reverting to her lonely drives.

'Oh no, ma'am! it's far from good I am! The Lord knows that! But a little bit of neighborly kindness like that, is what the poor often does for one another, *and don't think anything of it, neither!* To be sure this babe's mother isn't the likes of me, ma'am, but she is far worse off than she has been. Her husband is what they call an accountant—a kind of clerk, like; and he can't get no employ, and I think it's breaking his heart pretty fast.'

Here Mrs. Waldorf fairly burst into tears. 'Tell me where you live,' she said, 'and say nothing to this lady you speak of, but come to me to-morrow, will you?' and she put a card into the poor woman's hand.

'Surely I will ma'am,' said the washerwoman, 'and it's a kind heart you have!'

Mrs. Waldorf rode home with her heart and head full. 'How could I ever content myself with giving *money*,' she said to herself, 'when there is so much to be *done!*'

* * * * *

'How do you find yourself, this morning, my dear madam!' said Doctor ——, shortly after this.

'Oh, quite well, thank you!'

'What! no more lassitude! no more headaches!'

'Nothing of the sort, I assure! I never felt better.

'When did your symptoms abate?'

'I can scarcely tell; I have been too much occupied of late, to think of symptoms. I am so much interested in the study of Italian that I am going to ask Madame Vamiglia and her daughter to come to us for awhile, and we shall have Adelaide at home to take advantage of so good an opportunity for learning to converse.'

'And your ardor in searching out the distressed has been the means of restoring the son to the mother. How happy you must be?'

'That is a happiness which I owe to you! and Mr. Waldorf is going to employ Mr. Vamiglia, who understands and writes half a dozen different languages, and will be invaluable to him. But first the family are to go to the sea-shore for a month, to recruit; and I imagine they will need a good deal of preparation—so that I have really no time to be ill.'

'Then you have given up the going to the Pyramids?'

'Ah! my dear sir! I must thank you for showing me better sources of interest and excitement. I believe it must have been a

little *ruse* on your part—say! was not that famous medicine of yours only a trick—an *inganno felice?*'

'A trick! Oh! excuse me! 'Call it by some better name!' I beseech you,' said the doctor laughing, 'it was a most valuable medicine! Indeed the whole Materia Medica would be often powerless without the *placebo!* But I confess I could not think of sending you to the Pyramids, when there are not only pyramids but mountains of sorrow and suffering at home, which shun the eye of common charity, but which must be surmounted by just such heads, hearts and purses as those of Mrs. Waldorf!'

## THE DARK SIDE.

'We may predict a man's success in life from his spirits,' says Mr. Emerson (*viva voce*, if not in his published lectures). Not from his *spirit*, surely, or so many of the loveliest would not be for ever toiling on the lower rounds of life's ladder, while those who know not what manner of spirit they are of, and would be ashamed to look the truth in the face if it were presented to them, are sitting coolly at the top, or waving their hats in triumph at the moist-browed throng below. A man's spirit—made up of his honesty, his meekness, his patience, his humility, his charity, his sympathy—will not insure his success, allowing the world to be judge of success, as it claims to be. Animal spirits go much further towards it: and perhaps Mr. Emerson meant these. They are the world's *sine qua non*. It never sympathizes with one's depression. Grief it can understand, because there is vivacity in grief. It respects passion, for passion has movement and energy. But the man who can be discouraged by any stroke of fate whatever, it sets down as a poltroon, and if it turn not the cold shoulder of contempt upon him, it either treats him as a foil, or a stepping-stone, or it goes round as if he had never existed.

This discipline of Mother World seems somewhat hard to the life-

pupil. Like the rattan, or the slipper of nnrsery-training, it is rather pungent and irritating, for the time, than convincing or restorative. But like those balmy bitters, it saves a world of crude philosophizing when we have learned to consider it inevitable. As the rod furnishes the only royal road to learning, so the world's neglect offers the man who has not patience and courage for the beaten track, a short-cut to common sense; happy if egotism have not so befilmed his mental sight, that the iron finger points in vain the upward path!

These remarks, however, apply only to ordinary grumblers—the immense class of the great unappreciated, whose sense of their own merits wraps them all over like a cloak, so that out-siders may be excused if they pass by unconscious. There are others whose spirits fall below the tone required for the life-struggle, through mere tenderness and humility. These could be tolerably cheerful under their own troubles, if that were all; but it is a necessity of their nature to become so completely interwoven with the fate and feelings of those whom they find about them, that no thread can be snapped without disturbing them. Their indentity is diffused, as it were; they have a great frontier lying open to the enemy. Their house of life has so many windows for the sunshine, that every blast finds entrance. They become egotists through mere forgetfulness of self, since all the misfortunes of those they love are personal to them, and lead, like common egotism, to a morbid sensibility. We may exaggerate the troubles of our friends, as well as our own, and fall into despondency as proxy as well as principal.

This evil being the result of experience, it must be cured, homœopathically, by more experience. Hard rubs have no place in the treatment of such cases. As "amiable" people are apt to be very obstinate, so amiable weaknesses defy all direct efforts at reform. If

they do not cure themselves they are hopeless. Their owners are the last to believe them troublesome or inconvenient, as the Valaisans are said to consider their habitual goitre rather an ornament than otherwise.

But we may, perhaps, better illustrate the idea which set our pen in motion, by a sketch of the circumstances under which a certain person, whom we may as well call John Todd as anything else, came to consider himself as being *de trop* in the world. He had some apology, as the reader will allow.

He was the eldest son in a household whose head was just so much worse than the head of a bad pin that it did not come off, although decidedly of no use to any one, even the owner! Why such men are called to preside over tables badly covered in proportion as they are well surrounded, seems strange, but not so strange as the fact that they are apt to be quite jolly, rather personable, and particularly well-dressed people, full of wonder at the obstinate toiling and moiling of the world around them, and very severe upon the avarice of those who, having worked hard for their money, are disposed to be over-careful of it. They are always men of the most generous feelings; wishing for a million of dollars that they might have wherewithal to help everybody that needs help, and contriving ingenious plans of relief for all those ills of life which are supposed to lie within the curative powers of ready cash. As to their own means of living, they are invariably on the brink of becoming suddenly rich; either by the death of an uncle, who went to sea when he was a boy and has never been heard of since, and therefore must come home a nabob; or by the advanced value of land in the Northwest Territory, bought of the Indians at the rate of a gallon of whiskey the quarter section, twenty years ago, and on which no taxes have as yet been demanded; or from

the success of an entirely new branch of business, devised by the jolly man himself, and entered into with much zeal by his crony and *double*, Jack Thompson, who offers to be the outdoor partner, making the thing popular, by persuading people it is just what they want. Some form of 'speculation' it must be; for this order of genius finds mere industry dreadfully slow.

John Todd, then, was the son of a gentleman, i. e., of a man who had nothing, and who did nothing, or next to nothing, for his living, yet lived very well, and entertained very high sentiments. We need hardly say that Mrs. Todd, the mother, who luckily had had a very small annuity, secured to her by the foresight of an elder brother, was one of those hard-working, devoted creatures, who seem to have no individual existence, but to have been born the adjunct and complement of such men. How and where she found bread for the family,—to say nothing of beef,—was a mystery to the neighbors, to whose apprehension Mr. Todd seemed to do nothing but soil white waistcoats and plaited shirt-frills, lest his wife should get out of business. Not but he went down town every day; that was one of the duties held sacred in his estimation. But what he did there no echo ever betrayed, though the dinner hour never failed to find him punctually at home, generally complaining of fatigue, or at least exhaustion. Mrs. Todd was generally too weary to come to the table, which her husband excused with great amenity, kindly advising her to lie down and take a nap, as he could make out very well, which he certainly did. Some people took it into their heads that he was the invalid who declined giving his little daughter the last half of the seventeenth dumpling, saying, 'Papa's sick!' but this we cannot vouch for.

Children reared under such auspices are notedly good and

dutiful, and so were most of the youthful Todds; but John, being the oldest and ablest, and always his poor mother's right hand man, was the apex of the little pyramid, as well in character as in stature. Indeed, he never had any childhood. He occupied the position of confidential agent to his mother; a sort of property-man and scene-shifter to the needy establishment, where so much was to be done with so little. These two held long whispered conferences with each other, of which the subjects seldom transpired—the debates, perhaps, of a committee of ways and means on pantaloons or potatoes. Mysterious signs and movements, nods and winks, would pass between them occasionally, followed by dartings hither and thither on the part of John, and uneasy glances at the door or window on that of his mother, while the Papa Todd sat reading the newspaper and fidgeted for his breakfast, and the children were all huddled about the kitchen fire, because they must not disturb their 'poor father.' It was a great thing to be so preserved from selfishness as that family was, by its head taking all the risks of indulgences on his own shoulders. The virtue of self-denial, so beautiful to look at, became habitual with most of the members; and the father regarded this excellent quality in his household with a serene complacency quite edifying to behold.

It was a time of great trial to the mother when John was considered old enough to be put to business, an epoch which arrived much earlier in the judgment of Mr. than of Mrs. Todd. 'It ruins a boy to be brought up in idleness!' said he. 'Idleness!' *thought* the mother, but she said nothing, and her beloved factotum was placed with a merchant, who looked at him with much the same sort of interest with which one regards a new broom or a pair of bellows, which come in to supply the place of a worn-out article of household service. Here was a new page of life for our

poor little friend, who had always, amid the general dreariness of his lot, had

"Light upon him from his *mother's* eyes,"

at least.

Here were new duties, new and mocking faces, long, laborious days, unchecred by one kind word of encouragement. and a general consciousness that a boy in a store is only a necessary evil, out of whom it is everybody's business to get as much work as possible, by way of compensation for enduring his awkwardness. The boy had learned, somehow, that there is such a thing as fun in the world, and had even discovered some capacity for it in himself, though he had deferred the use of it under the emergencies of home-life. But he soon found there must be a still further postponement of the laughing era. All was grave about him, so grave that nothing short of a hyena could have ventured upon a laugh there, and poor John was anything but a hyena in disposition. So he learned to withdraw into himself and paint pictures of an ideal future, when his present probation should result in a pleasant and plentiful home for his parents, where his father need not have to complain of fatigue, and his mother should sit all day by the front window in a rocking-chair, never doing anything unless she chose! These visions consoled him under many things, and became, indeed, the substitute for hope, in his mind, as similar ones are in many other minds. He wondered why he was not happier. His employers were not *un*kind to him, and he did not perceive that negatives have very little to do with our happiness. His labors were no greater than they had been at home, and he was better dressed and better fed. It was only the atmosphere of love that he missed, yet he pined, in secret, like a geranium in Greenland,

and became, outwardly, a dull, drudging boy, without power to rise above the present by reaching towards the future.

Home troubles, too, had their share in keeping his heart in shadow. His father failed for the dozenth time in some scheme for sudden wealth, and several of the better pieces of furniture had from time to time mysteriously disappeared from the house, leaving blank spaces no less in the imagination of the children than in the rooms they had once graced. The story of the Iron Shroud,—a prison whose walls advanced daily inward, lessening the walking and breathing space of the wretch within,—only shadows forth the stealthy but unmistakeable approach of absolute poverty in a family like this; and though the boy's imagination did not body it forth thus, his sense of the truth was none the less crushing to his spirits. His poor mother never complained, and, indeed, would hardly answer his anxious questions; but there was a growing sadness in her very kisses, which often sent him to bed half choking with desponding thoughts, the most prominent of which was that of his own miserable inefficiency in the case. A drop of added bitterness was the behavior of his brother Charles,—the father's favorite and image,—a handsome, showy boy of twelve or thirteen, who ought to have taken John's place as Mrs. Todd's aid and comforter, but who chose rather to slip away to play in the street, and to do many other things which filled the tender mother's heart with anxiety. John often tried to talk a little with his brother about these matters, but one of the most discouraging things in Charles's character was a sort of plausibility or facility, which led him to assent to all general propositions in morals, while he ingeniously eluded every possible application of any to his own conduct. He never got angry at reproof,—a sure sign that he had no idea of profiting by it. Truth excites passion whenever it

touches us personally, and we may as well fire paper bullets against a stone wall, as attempt to apply it to a heart secretly fortified with evil intention. Charles's real determination was to take his pleasure wherever he could find it, while his instinctive love of character impelled him equally to avoid disgrace. These two aims generally lead to hypocrisy, hardly recognised by the sinner himself while success lasts; and Charles Todd was as yet called a fine boy by almost everybody, though he was giving his mother and his prematurely careful brother many a private heart-ache.

After John had worked hard for a year, with the hope of earning some increase to his pittance, he was discharged with very slight warning, his employer observing that he was 'rather dull,' which was no doubt true. A bright-looking, well-dressed boy took his place; and he set about, with leaden heart, looking for another, all the harder to find because it was necessary he should find it. When found at last, it proved to be of a considerably lower tone than the first;—a smaller establishment, and so far mortifying to his boyish pride, but otherwise—that is, in the main point of kindly interest and sympathy—very similar. And this was the general experience of four or five years or so,—a period which may be left to the reader's imagination, after the hints we have given.

Somewhere during this period, Mr. Todd, the father, fell on the ice and broke his leg badly, which effectually checked his speculative as well as ambulative powers, and changed the character of his wife's toils a little without materially increasing them. This accident, happening just after John had obtained an increase of salary, which raised his hopes a shade or two, seemed to him a final sentence as to any chance of prosperity in his unlucky career. His heart sank within him as he saw his father established on the old skeleton sofa, which had long since ceased to offer any temptation to

lounging habits, and his mother and two young sisters sitting by it, trying to earn something by means of that suicidal implement, the seamstress's needle. It was impossible for him to feel only just enough solicitude on their account. The weight of his pity and tenderness hung on his hands and heart, lessening his power of aid. The too present idea of their privations led him to reduce even his diet below the just measure required for strength and courage to a constitution like his, and to go so shabbily dressed as to lessen materially his chance of obtaining better wages. He passed for a good, sober, useful fellow, who expected but little, though he was willing to turn his hand to anything. It is not in human nature to give a seedy, threadbare-looking man as much as we would give a smartly dressed one, under the same circumstances—a truth not very creditable to that nature of ours, and worthy of some examination by employers.

Charles now began to take the lead of his elder brother in all respects. His animated manner and frank-sounding words were very prepossessing, and he early obtained the situation of book-agent, a business for which address may be said to be the first, second, and third requisite, though there is perhaps a fourth, of no less consequence. His pay was irregular, and his outlay for dress considerable ; and although he continued to live at home, he professed himself unable to contribute any fixed sum to the family means, though he occasionally made his mother or sisters a present, which loomed much larger in their imaginations than the constant offerings of John, dropping unperceived like the dew, and performing as important an office. Charles always wore the gay and fascinating air of success, and it was natural for a mother to be proud of him, and to hope everything from him, gladly dismissing the misgivings of the past, and persuading herself that Charles had a good heart.

after all,—a conclusion to which mothers are prone to arrive rather through the affections than the judgment.

John, though he felt tempted to envy his brother the facility with which he acquired the reputation of having a good heart, had too good a one of his own to view his prosperity with jaundiced eyes He was proud of him, too, for there is something bewitching in personal advantages, say what we will.

Yes, there is something bewitching about them, with which reason has little to do. John had already experienced this, for he had fallen in love with a pretty girl of the neighborhood,—an orphan who lived with relatives not much disposed to be kind to her,—so said common report. Susan Bartlett had a delicate, appealing kind of beauty, which seemed quite as much the result of sensibility as of complexion and outline. The family with whom she found a home were rough, coarse people, among whom her air of natural refinement appeared to great advantage. She was evidently not comfortable in her position, a circumstance nearly as attractive as her beauty, to one who fancied himself the 'predestined child of care.' If she had looked happy, he would never have dared to love her, but her pensive smile encouraged him, and the gentle, half-grateful air with which she received his attentions, so excited his languid self-complacency, that he had occasionally a gleam of hope that he might be somebody to somebody yet. In short, the first rose-tint that fell upon his life-stream was from the dawn of this tender passion; and Susan's beauty, lighting up her lover's clouds, called forth many a golden shimmering air-castle, all ready to be drawn down to earth and turned into a comfortable dwelling some day.

For an hour or more after Susan had shyly owned that she returned his affection, John wondered that he had ever fancied himself doomed to ill-fortune. What was the cold, harsh world to him!

Susan, like himself, had been used to straitened circumstances, and she was willing to share his lot, be it what it might. It was not long before he was forced to remember that a lot may be too narrow to be shared with anybody, but his new talisman did a good deal to keep off the foul fiend Despondency, so that his pleasure was not turned into pain much more than half the time.

Mrs. Todd felt appalled, for the moment, when she was told of John's engagement. Not only did the condition of the family demand more than all the aid the dutiful son could give it, but to the cooler eyes of the mother, Susan's temperament and habits were ill-calculated to promote the happiness of a poor and very sensitive man. Mrs. Todd thought her indolent and inefficient; wanting in force of character, and likely to take almost any coloring from those about her; but she wisely said nothing, for the matter was settled, and she could only grieve her son without the hope of benefit. Susan was very sweet and amiable in the family, and much a favorite with Mr. Todd, whose dull hours were considerably lightened by the presence of a pretty girl, who would sometimes read to him or entertain him with the gossip of the hour. Charles, too, was delighted with his sister-in-law that was to be, and as he had much more leisure than John, often took his brother's place as her escort, or called upon her as John's proxy when he was necessarily detained.

This period of our hero's life was like a delicious Indian summer, when the atmosphere is full of golden haze, which throws a soft illusion over everything, hiding the bareness of reality, and bestowing a happy indistinctness upon distant objects. Such seasons are never long ones. The frosts of truth clear the air and force us to think upon the needs of wintry life, if we would not wake up to a distress which no illusion can gild. No man could be more sincerely

in love than John Todd; but, in this case as in others, his goodness stood in the way of his happiness. A selfish man would have been amply satisfied with the pleasure of being beloved by the woman of his choice; but the good son could not long so forget his old duties as not to miss in Susan some of the qualities which would have made her a comfort to his mother. His own love was so generous, so entire; his heart beat so tenderly for all that could interest Susan, that it was hardly in human nature not to feel some disappointment at finding in her no corresponding interest in those so dear to him. Susan evidently felt that her position was properly that of an idol, which nobody can expect to see come down from its pedestal and mingle on equal terms with its worshippers. Not that her manner was arrogant or assuming; that was always sweet and gentle. It was rather what she omitted than what she did, that brought John to the sad conviction that her affections had no tendency to be led by his, and that he had not succeeded in winning a daughter's love for his mother by giving away so largely of his own. So fate pursued him. The golden clouds changed to purple, and the purple to lead-color, in his mind; and he felt more keenly than ever that he was doomed to be unhappy, since love, which had seemed for a time to make every sad thought absurd, had failed to satisfy him, as it seemed to do other men. John did not know how easily other men are satisfied—sometimes.

Home affairs, meanwhile, certainly had brightened a little. Somehow, unaccountably, the family had not become any poorer for Mr. Todd's long illness. Much kindness had been brought out by the circumstance, and friends had come forward in a way which materially aided Mrs. Todd without lowering her self-respect. While a man like Mr. Todd remains at the head of affairs, there is always a kind of simmering indignation among the friends and

relatives of the family, which prevents their showing the sympathy they cannot but feel for the suffering members. But when he is fairly out of the way, cempassion claims its natural course, as in this case. A teacher in the neighborhood took two of the girls as free pupils, insisting that she could do so without the least cost to herself, —a mode of Christian charity more practised by that most laborious and ill-paid class than the world at all suspects. Physicians, too, discerning the true state of things, either forgot to send their bills at all, or made merely nominal charges, as they are doing every day in similar cases, with a liberality for which they get little credit. In short, even John was obliged to own to himself that a seeming misfortune may have its bright side, though the conviction did not remain present with him constantly enough to make head against the bad habit of low spirits.

Charles, meanwhile, was dashing away as usual, handsome, gay, and confident; now and then sending home some showy, useless article to his mother or sisters, and sometimes, though more rarely, throwing money into their laps, which seemed doubled in value by the grace with which it was given. There was no coming at a distinct notion of his affairs, for a book-agency naturally fluctuates a good deal, and refers to 'luck' more than some other kinds of business. But he always seemed to have leisure for visiting, and money for amusements, so his mother fought resolutely against intrusive fears that there might be something hollow in this prosperity. The elder brother was less easily satisfied, for he knew rather more of Charles's habits.

It was not long before his fears were justified. Charles came to the store one day, and with an appearance of great agitation asked to see his brother apart.

'What *is* the matter?' said John, whose imagination rushed homewards at once, prognosticating evil to the loved ones there.

'I've got myself into trouble,' said the other; and as he had done this several times before, his brother felt relieved to find it no worse.

But further explanation showed him that the present was no ordinary affair.

'I have lost a sum of money belonging to our firm—' began Charles.

'Lost! how lost?'

'Oh! I've been robbed, but 'tis a long story, and the question is now how to get out of the scrape. It is only two hundred dollars!'

'Only two hundred dollars!' said John aghast, for he had not two hundred cents to call his own.

'What is to be done? Will not your firm wait till you have had time to repay it by degrees?'

'Wait! they must never know it! I should be ruined for ever if they did. Can't you help me? I could pay *you* by degrees, you know! You can get an advance on your salary. You always stand well with your employers; do ask, that's a good fellow, and I will promise that this shall be the last time that I will ever trouble you.'

'But you do not consider that this would take the very bread out of mother's mouth, and the children's. You know they cannot live a week without what I bring them. You must find some other resource. Surely your firm must have some confidence in you after so long a connexion.'

'Oh, they are stiff old fellows, and they've been prejudiced against me by one or two little matters, such as happen to every young man. You are my only hope, for I will never survive disgrace.'

It is needless to recount the arguments of a man without prin-

ciple, who knew his brother's goodness of heart to be greater than his firmness. After a very long talk, in the course of which John ascertained that the 'robbery' was only the form under which Charles chose to represent a loss at the gaming-table, and which he professed to believe the result of fraud, the matter ended as Charles knew it would—in John's going, with shame and confusion of face, to his employers, and asking an advance of the required sum. The distress with which he did it was most evident, and the reluctance with which his request was granted quite as unmistakeable; but when he met his brother at the appointed time with the money, one would have hardly supposed Charles to be the obliged party, so easily did he make light of the whole affair.

'The old hunkers!" he said, "it will do 'em good to bleed a little. After slaving for them so long, it would be pretty, indeed, to be refused such a trifle! You let them impose upon you, John! If you only had a little more spirit they would treat you better. If our old fellows had been as niggardly with me, I should have left them long ago; but they know better!'

When John, not attempting to defend himself against the charge of wanting spirit, only desired to know what were his brother's prospects of refunding the money, for want of which the family at home must suffer, Charles talked grandly, but vaguely, of some Californian propositions that had been made to him, saying he did not know whether he should accept them or not, but, at any rate, he should pay the money very shortly.

'Do not wait,' said John, 'for any considerable part of it. Remember poor mother, and all her privations and difficulties. Father requires every day more and more care and labor; for you know he is nearly helpless, and it takes quite one person's time to nurse him.

Pray hand me, from time to time, every dollar you can spare; for I foresee much trouble from this miserable business.'

'Oh, you are always foreseeing trouble,' said Charles, gaily. 'You're famous for that. Why don't you look on the bright side, as I do! The world owes us a living, at least. I'm sure it does me, and I mean to have it, too! I've got half a dozen plans in my head.'

'I don't like the California project very well,' said John, as his brother was about to leave him.

'O; perhaps you'll like it better by and by!' was the reply: and the brothers separated.

John went home with a heavy heart; but he was used to a heavy heart, so he said nothing of what had passed. After tea, he called for Susan, who had engaged to go with him to some lecture, but found her ill with a headache. Her aunt said she had gone to bed, and must not be disturbed! so John went home, and went to bed too, not feeling very sorry to be quite alone, that he might reflect, undisturbed, upon the state of affairs. He was far from feeling satisfied with himself for having yielded to Charles's passionate and selfish importunity, what was absolutely necessary to the support of the family; and he could see no way of right, except that of some new self-sacrifice, which should make good the deficiency, at least in part. After turning over in his mind every possible way of earning mony at extra hours, and saving it by excessive abstinence, he fell asleep, undecided between an evening class in writing, and the carriership of an early morning paper, which would furnish him with employment before daylight, and allow him to reach the store at the appointed hour. He rather thought he should try both.

The next morning his father was worse, so much worse, that he would hardly have felt justified in leaving his mother, if the transaction of the day before had not made it absolutely necessary that he

should appear at the store. He looked so haggard and care-worn, that his employers thought he must be ill, and recommended that he should go home, which he gladly prepared to do, mentioning his father's dangerous condition. Just as he was locking his desk, a note came from his mother, desiring to see him immediately; and he ran home, hardly expecting to find his father still alive.

But there was no change for the worse, yet his mother was pale as ashes, and trembling all over.

'Oh, John?' she said, and that was all.

'What is it, mother—what *can* it be?'

'Susan—'

'Dead!'

'No, not dead!' and Mrs. Todd held up a letter.

'Read it, mother,' said John, in a strange, quiet voice, as if he was in a magnetic sleep, and could see the contents through the paper.

And Mrs. Todd read:

'I hardly dare take the pen to write to you, John, yet it seems better than leaving you without a word. I shall not try to excuse myself, but I feel sure I should never have been happy, or have made you happy, if I had kept to our engagement only for shame's sake. I did love you at the beginning; I was not deceitful then; but afterwards I learned to love another better, and for this you are partly to blame. You are too grave and serious for me: I have not spirits enough for us both. I always felt down-hearted after we had been together, although you were always so kind and good. Do not fret about this; fall in love with somebody else—somebody that is gay and light-hearted. I know I am running a great risk, and very likely shall be sorry that I ever left a man so good as you

are for one who is more pleasant, but not any better, not so good, perhaps. I would have told you sooner, but could not make up my mind. God bless you and farewell.

'SUSAN.'

'Another! another!' said John; 'what *other?*' Nobody spoke. There was a sort of shuddering guess in the bottom of the heart of several of the family, but no one could endure to suggest it.

'Nobody knows,' said Mrs. Todd; 'Susan left the house alone, they say.'

John went to his own room, and locked himself in for some hours. In the evening a gentleman called, and asked to see him alone. It was one of the firm in whose employ Charles had been for some years.

'Have you been aware of your brother's intention of going to California?' said Mr.——.

'To California! No—yes—that is, I have heard him say he had had offers to go there.'

'You do not know then, that he sailed in the packet of to-day?

John could but repeat the words, half stupified.

'Did not the family know of his marriage? He was married just before he went on board, as we understand.'

All was now clear enough as to Susan; but John had yet to learn that, instead of having lost money at play, as he pretended, Charles had received a considerable sum for the house within a day or two, and only borrowed of his brother to increase his means for the elopement.

That evening Mr. Todd grew rapidly worse, and at midnight he died.

It is recorded of one of the heroic Covenanters who were sub-

jected to the hideous punishment of the boot—which consisted in enclosing the leg in an iron case and driving in a wedge upon the bone—that after the second stroke upon the wedge he was observed to laugh, which naturally excited the curiosity of those whose business it was to torture him. 'I laugh,' said he, 'to think I could have been so foolish as to dread the second blow, since the first destroyed all sensation.'

It was not long before John Todd was aware of a sort of cheerfulness arising from the sense that he had reached the extreme point of misery. It acted as a tonic upon his mind, as the heartburn of acidity is relieved by lemonjuice. He felt more like a man than he had ever done in his life. This was proved, even to his own astonishment, when he found himself stating his position to his employers, from whom he had just borrowed a large sum (for him), and requesting of them a farther advance. This they granted with alacrity, for he had asked it with honest confidence.

'We should be glad to see you as soon as convenient;—we have something to say to you,' said the elder merchant.

Two days before, this request would have made John's very heart quake, for his timidity would have prompted prognostics of evil; but now he felt bold and strong, and promised readily to be at the store as soon as he could leave home. He began to think it rather pleasant to be in despair.

After the funeral was over, and the succeeding blank pressed hard upon him, he bethought him of the request of Messrs. ——. On the way he had a return of his old feelings, and began to paint to himself the horrors of being turned off; but he soon drove them away with the thought that there were many more places in the world, and his own chance as good as another man's.

The object of the business conference was to propose to John

Todd a share in the concern, the proprietors not being of the class with whom modesty hides merit. They had observed in him both industry and ability, joined with the most transparent honesty and truth of character, and they were wise enough to wish to secure him. Happily good spirits are not so much missed in a counting-house as in some other places.

The care of the family now devolving more obviously upon him, he removed them into a smaller but more comfortable house than had suited his father's notions, and had the happiness of seeing his mother relieved from the more harassing portion of her cares and labors, and at liberty to rest sometimes, which was a new thing in her overdriven life. His own private troubles he never mentioned, and the subject was dropped by common consent, though the woe-worn face of Mrs. Todd was, in spite of herself, a perpetual memento of the whole sad past.

At the end of some eight or ten months, news came from San Francisco that Charles had died of the disease of the country, just as he was about to be seized on the charge of embezzlement. John thought at once of Susan, unworthy as she was, and fearing she might suffer want among strangers, would fain have urged her return; but he resisted the impulse of a tenderness that might have been weakness, and only wrote to a friend in California to see that his brother's widow did not lack the ordinary comforts. In spite of this wise resolution his mind was a good deal disturbed by the image of his first love, until Susan fortunately broke the spell by marrying at San Francisco an emigrant of no immaculate fame.

Thus completed John's recovery, and made a man of him. As he had at first loved Susan from pity—a wretched reason for a life-love—so he might have loved her again from pity, since he ascribed her aberration rather to weakness than to deliberate treachery. Now

he saw her as she was, a poor, vacillating, selfish creature, devoid of every desirable quality,—unless we reckon as such a quiet and gentle manner, the result of temperament, not principle; not the woman to whom a man of tolerable sense could safely intrust his happiness and honor. The recollection of Charles was bitter, indeed; but his career had borne its legitimate fruit, and there was mitigation in the thought that the disgrace of a public trial and imprisonment had been spared them all.

John's complete restoration was not rapidly accomplished, but like other recoveries from typhus, subject to relapses. But he never fell back entirely. Braced by misfortune, his nerves were strung for lesser ills, and his unhappy habit of self-depreciation—the most dangerous form of egotism, since it borrows the specious semblance of humility, though it is often nothing less than rank pride—was cured by the testimony of experience. The happiness of being everything to his mother and her children was of itself healing to his wounded self-love, and in due time he married a woman very different from Susan Bartlett, since her attractions were her own, and not those of circumstance. John Todd finished by owning himself happy.

We have all this time said no word of our hero's religion, because we do not think a man's religion worth speaking of, so long as he is determined to be his own Providence, and refuses to intrust the main web of his life to the weaving of the Unerring Hand. In truth, with all his goodness it was only the occurrences we have narrated that taught him the wholesome lesson of dependence and submission, and convinced him that if he made his happiness depend upon freedom from misfortune, he must go through life under a cloud. He perceived that he had taken too much upon himself; and his view of his own private responsibility for everything that

could possibly befall himself and his friends, was much modified, without any diminution of sensibiiity or efficiency. And here let us leave our exemplar, praying the reader's patience and pardon if John Todd has seemed to them only an essay in disguise.

# COURTING BY PROXY.

## A TALE OF NEW YORK.

Young Mr. Alonzo Romeo Rush was dreadfully in love—as, indeed, which of us is not? Everybody has a passion, though, fortunately, the objects are infinitely various. Mr. Alonzo was in love with himself for a year or two after he took leave of childhood and milk-and-water; but after that his grandmamma told him he ought to marry, and he forthwith fell violently in love with his future wife, and vowed to allow himself no rest till he had found her. This may be termed 'love in the abstract,' which, as we shall see, is not without its perplexities.

Mr. Alonzo was a darling boy, an orphan, and the heir of a good Knickerbocker fortune. His grandmamma was his guardian, in a sense beyond the cold, legal meaning of the term. She picked the bones out of his fish, and reminded him of his pocket-handkerchief, during all the years of his tenderer boyhood; and, until he was full fourteen years old, he slept in her room, and had his face washed by her own hands, in warm water, every morning. Even after he called himself a man, she buttered his muffins and tucked up his bed-clothes, with a solicitude above all praise.

Thanks to her care and attention, he reached the age of twenty-one in safety, excepting that he was very subject to colds, which alarmed his venerable relative extremely; and excepting also that he showed an unaccountable liking for the society of a little tailoress who had always made his clothes during his minority.

But now, as we have said, he was dreadfully in love; and what made his situation the more puzzling was that his grandmamma, in her various charges, had entirely omitted to specify the lady to whom his devotions ought to be paid. She even urged him to choose for himself. What a responsibility!

'Only remember, Alonzo,' said the good lady, 'that you will never be happy with a girl that does not like muffins, and that it is as easy to love a rich girl as a poor one.'

'Yes,' responded Mr. Alonzo, with rather an absent air; 'yes, and as to muffins—' here he sunk into a reverie.

'Grandma!' exclaimed the darling, after some pause, 'couldn't you ask Parthenia Blinks here to tea?'

'Certainly, my dear,' said the good lady, and she rang the bell at once, preparatory to the making of several kinds of cake, and various other good things.

The invitation was duly sent, and as duly accepted by Miss Parthenia Blinks, who found it politic always to accept an invitation, that she might do as she pleased when the time came—a practice fully adopted by many fashionables.

The time did come, and there was the tea-table, set out with four kinds of preserves, arranged with the most exact quadrangularity; in the centre a large basket heaped with cake, and at the sides two mountains of toast and muffins; tea, coffee, and various accessories completing the prospect.

The fine old Knickerbocker parlor was in its primest order, every

chair standing exactly parallel with its brother; the tea-kettle singing on its chafing-dish, the cat purring on the hearth-rug. Two sofas, covered with needle-work, were drawn up to the fire, and the mandarins on the chimney-piece nodded at each other and at the pink and azure shepherds and shepherdesses which ornamented the space between them. Mr. Alonzo Romeo Rush stood before the glass, giving the last twirl to an obstinate side-lock, which, in spite of persuasion and pomatum, *would* obey that fate called a cow-lick.

An impetuous ring at the door. The little tailoress, who had been giving a parting glance at her own handy-work, slipped out of the room, sighing softly; and Alonzo and his grandmamma seated themselves on the opposite sofas, for symmetry's sake.

A billet in a gilded envelope. Miss Parthenia Blinks' regrets.

'What an impudent thing!' said the old lady, with a toss of her cap. (We do not know whether she meant the act or the young lady.) 'But come, my dear, you shall eat the muffins, and never mind her. The next time I ask Miss Blinks it will do her good, I know.'

Mr. Alonzo, nothing daunted by this mortifying slight, turned his thoughts next to Miss Justina Cuypers, a young lady who resided with two maiden aunts in a house which had suffered but little change since the Revolution. The first step which suggested itself to the darling, was to ask Miss Cuypers to ride; but to reach this golden apple the aunts must be propitiated, and therefore it was judged best that grandmamma should make one of the party, in order that none of the proprieties might be violated. Alonzo was charioteer, but, as he was not much accustomed to driving, his grandmamma felt it her duty to take the reins out of his hands very frequently, besides giving him many

directions as to which rein he ought to pull, in meeting the numerous vehicles which they encountered on the Harlem road. Whether from the excess of his passion for Miss Cuypers, who never spoke once the whole way, or whether from the confusion incident to reiterated instructions, poor Mr. Alonzo did finish the drive by an overturn, which did not kill anybody, but spoiled the young lady's new bonnet, and covered her admirer with mud and mortification.

The failure of these kindly attempts of his grandmamma to save him the trouble of getting a wife, taught Mr. Alonzo a lesson. He drew the astute inference that old ladies were not good proxies in all cases. He even thought of taking the matter into his own hands, and with this view it was not long before he set out, like a prince in a fairy tale, to seek his fortune.

The first house he came to—that is to say, the one to which his footsteps turned most naturally—was one belonging to a distant connection of his grandmamma, a lady whose ancestor came over with Hendrik Hudson, or, as the family chroniclers insisted, a little before. Miss Alida Van Der Benschoten, the daughter of this lady—a fresh sprout from the time-honored tree—might have been known to Alonzo, but that he had always hidden himself when her mamma brought her to pay her annual visit to his grandmamma. She resided with her mother, one ancient sister, and two great rude brothers, on the borders of the city, in one of those tempting ruralities called cottages, built of brick, three stories high, and furnished with balconies and verandahs of cast iron, all very agricultural indeed, as a certain lady said of a green door. The idea of Miss Alida being once entertained, the shrubberies about the Van Der Benschoten cottage, consisting of three altheas, a privet hedge, and a Madeira vine, seemed to invite a Romeo, and our

hero resolved to open his first act with a balcony scene. Not that he had a speech ready, for if he had he would have delivered it in the parlor; but he had heard much of the power of sweet sounds, and conceived the idea of trying them upon the heart of Miss Alida before he ventured upon words, as Hannibal, (was n't it?) having rocks to soften, tried vinegar before pickaxes. Having often encountered bands of music in the streets at night—or rather in the evening, for his grandmamma never allowed him to be out after ten—he concluded the business of these patrols to be serenading; and, making great exertions to find one of the most powerful companies, he engaged their leader to be in full force before Mrs. Van Der Benschoten's door on a certain evening, resolved himself to lie *perdu*, in a convenient spot, ready to speak if the young lady should appear on the balcony, as he did not doubt she would. The Coryphæus of the band was true to his promise, and he and his followers had played with all their might for half an hour or so, when, observing no demonstration from the house, and feeling rather chilly, they consulted their employer as to the propriety of continuing.

'Oh! go on, go on,' whispered Mr. Alonzo; 'she is n't waked up yet!' (The youth understood the true object of a serenade.) 'Play away till you hear something.'

And, on the word, Washington's March aroused the weary echoes, if not Miss Alida.

This new attack certainly was not in vain. A window was softly opened, and as the band, inspired by this sign of life, threw new vigor into their instrumentation, a copious shower of boots, boot-jacks, billets of wood, and various other missiles, untuned the performers, who, in spite of the martial spirit breathed but just before, all ran away forthwith.

Mr. Alonzo scorned to follow, particularly as he had a snug berth under one of the three altheas; but a voice crying "Seek him—seek him, Vixen!' and the long bounds of a dog in the back yard dislodged him, and he made an ignominious retreat.

We dare not describe the dreams of our hero that night; but we record it to his everlasting credit that he was not disheartened by this inauspicious conclusion of his daring adventure. He ascribed the rude interruption, very correctly, to one of Miss Alida's brothers; and every time he met one of them in the street he used to tell his grandmamma of it when he came home, always adding that he only wished he knew whether *that was the one!*

Music was still a good resource, and Mr. Alonzo resolved to try it in another form. He knew a young gentleman who played the guitar, and sang many a soft Spanish ditty to its seductive twanging; and, as this youth happened to be a good-natured fellow, and one who did a large amount of serenading on his own account, it was not difficult to persuade him to attempt something for a friend.

So, when next the fair moon favored the stricken-hearted, the two young men, choosing a spot of deepest shade, beset Miss Alida with music of a far more insidious character than that first employed by the inexperienced Alonzo. Few female hearts can resist the influence of such bewitching airs as those with which good-natured Harry Blunt endeavored to expound his friend's sweet meanings; and, after a whole round of sentiment had rung from the guitar, and the far sweeter tenor of its owner, a window opened once more, and poor Mr. Alonzo scampered off incontinent.

Harry, who had not been exposed to the storm which rewarded the previous serenade, stood his ground, and had the satisfaction of picking up a delicate bouquet which fell just before him in the

moonlight. This he carried, most honorably, to his friend, whom he supposed to be already in Miss Alida's good graces.

'What shall I do?' said Mr. Alonzo, who had a dim perception of the responsibility attached to this favor from a lady.

'Do!' exclaimed Harry, laughing, 'why, order a splendid one at N—'s, and send a servant with it to-morrow, with your compliments.'

'So I will!—see if I don't,' said Mr. Alonzo, delighted. 'I'll get one as big as a dinner-plate.'

In pursuance of this resolve, he called up an old family servant, and, locking the door, gave him ample directions, and in the most solemn manner.

'And mind, Moses,' said young master, 'get one of the very largest size, and give whatever they ask.' Hapless Alonzo! Why not put on thy hat, and go forth to choose thy bouquet in person? Moses took the ten-dollar note which Alonzo handed him, and departed with injunctions to utmost speed and inviolable discretion.

Mr. Alonzo paced the floor, with the air of a man who, having done his best, feels that he ought to succeed, till at length the returning steps of his messenger greeted his ear.'

'Well, Mose! have you carried it? Did you get a handsome one? Did you see her? What did she say?'

Poor Mose showed the entire white of his eyes.

'Why Massa,' said he, 'you ax me too many questions to onst. I got him, and I carried him to Miss Van Der Benschoten's house, but I no see the young woman; but I tell the colored gentleman at the door who sent him.'

'That was right,' said Mr. Alonzo; but was it large and handsome Moses?'

'Monstrous big, Massa; big as dat stand any how! And here's the change; I beat him down a good deal, for he ask two shillin, and I make him take eighteen pence.'

And it was with much self-complacency that good old Moses pulled out of his pocket a handful of money.

'Change!' said Mr. Alonzo, with much misgiving, 'change—eighteenpence—two shillings—what are you talking about? What kind of flowers were they?

'Oh! beautiful flowers, massa. There was pi'nies and laylocks, and paas-blumechies, and eberyting!'

We will only say that if hard words could break bones, poor old Moses would not have had a whole one left in his body—but of what avail?

Next day came out invitations for a large party at Mrs. Van Der Benschoten's, and Harry Blunt, who had been spied out by one of the belligerent brothers of Miss Alida, and recognized as the hero of the serenade *à l' Espagnol*, was invited, while our poor friend, Alonzo, was overlooked entirely, in spite of the laugh which his elegant bouquet had afforded the young ladies.

The morning after the party, Alonzo encountered his friend Harry, who had been much surprised at his absence.

'Why didn't you go?' he asked; 'it was a splendid affair. I heard of your bouquet, but I explained, and you need not mind. Write a note yonrself—that will set all right again.'

'Would you really?' said Mr. Alonzo, earnestly.

'To be sure I would! Come, do it at once.'

But Alonzo recollected that he had not yet found much time to bestow on his education, so that the writing of a note would be somewhat of an undertaking.

'Can't you do it for me?' said he; you are used to these things.'

Oh, yes, certainly,' said the obliging Harry, and he dashed off a very pretty note, enveloped it, *comme il faut*, and directed it to Miss Van Der Benschoten, Humming-Bird Place.

A most obliging answer was returned—an answer requiring a reply; and, by the aid of his friend Harry, Mr. Alonzo Romeo Rush kept up his side of the correspondence with so much spirit, that, in the course of a few weeks, he was invited to call at the rural residence, with an understanding on all sides that this interview was to be the end of protocols, and the incipient stage of definitive arrangements which would involve the future happiness of a pair of hearts.

It was an anxious morning, that which fitted out Mr. Alonzo Romeo Rush for this expedition. His grandmamma washed and combed him, and the little tailoress brushed his clothes, picking off every particle of lint with her slender fingers, and thinking when she had done, that he stood the very perfection of human loveliness.

'Thank you, Mary,' said he, very kindly, and, as he looked at her, he could not but notice the deep blush which covered a cheek usually pale for want of exercise and amusement.

However this was no time to look at tailoresses; and Mr. Alonzo was soon on his way to Humming-Bird Place.

How his hand trembled as he fumbled for the bell-handle, and how reminiscences crowded upon him as he saw on the step a large dog which he knew by intuition to be the very Vixen of the serenade. Then to think of what different circumstances he stood in at present! Oh! it was overpowering, and Mr. Alonzo was all in a perspiration when the servant opened the door.

'Is Miss Van Der Benschoten at home?'

'Yes, sir!' A low bow. 'Walk up stairs, sir?'

Another low bow. The servant must have guessed his errand.

He was ushered into a twilight drawing-room, and sat down, his heart throbbing so that it made the sofa-cushions quiver.

Hark!—a footstep—a lady—and in another instant Mr. Alonzo had taken a small hand without venturing to look at the face of the owner. He had forgotten to make a speech, so he held the little hand and meditated one.

At length he began—'Miss Van Der Benschoten, my grandmamma—' and here, at fault, he looked up inadvertantly.

'What is the matter, Mr. Rush!' exclaimed the lady.

'I—am sick—' said Alonzo, making a rush for the street door.

The lady was the elder sister of Miss Alida, diminutive, ill-formed, and with such a face as one sees in very severe nightmare.

Alonzo reached his grandmamma's, and the first person he met as he dashed through the hall was the little tailoress.

We know not if he had made a Jeptha-like vow in the course of his transit; but he caught the hand of his humble friend, and said, with startling energy,

'Mary!' will you marry me?'

'I! I!' said the poor girl, and she burst into tears.

But Alonzo, now in earnest, found no lack of words; and the result was that he drew Mary's arm through his, and half led, half carried her, straight to his grandmamma's sofa.

'Grandma!' said he, 'This shall be my wife or nobody. I have tried to love a rich girl, but I love Mary without trying. Give us your blessing, grandma, and let's have the wedding at once.'

The old lady, speechless, could only hold up both hands; but Alonzo, inspired by real feeling, looked so different from the soulless darling he had ever seemed, that she felt an involuntary respect which prevented her opposing his will very decidedly. It was not

long before he obtained an absolute permission to be happy in his own way. Wise grandmamma!—say we.

Mary was always a good girl, and riding in her own carriage has made her a beauty, too. She is not the only lady of the 'aucune' family who flourishes within our bounds. As for our friend Alonzo, he smiles instead of sighing, as he passes Humming-Bird Place.

## GROWING OLD GRACEFULLY.

One would think the art of growing old gracefully would form a prominent study with at least that portion of human race which is happy enough to take an æsthetic view of common things. For what can be a more universal concern? Who is heroically vain enough to desire that departing charms should carry life with them? Who is not liable to live beyond the time when to be is to be charming?

It may safely be taken for granted, that every one likes to please; there are hardly exceptions to prove the rule. Whatever subtile disguises this love of pleasing may put on—however it may borrow roughness, or carelessness, or egotism, or sarcasm, as its mask—there it is, snug in the bottom of each human heart, from St. Simeon Stylites shivering under the night-dews, to Jenny Lind flying from adoring lion-hunters, and Pio Nono piously tapping his gold snuff-box, and saying he is only a poor priest! The little boy who has committed his piece with much labor of brain, much screwing of body, and anxious gesticular tuition, utterly refuses to say it when the time comes. Why? Not because he does not wish to please, but because his intense desire to do so has suddenly assumed a new form, that of fear; which like other passions, is very unreasonable.

The same cause will make a young lady who has bestowed much thought on a new ball-dress, declare at the last moment, that she does not want to go! A doubt has suddenly assailed her as to the success of her costume. The dress is surely beautiful, but will it make her so? No vigor of personal vanity preserves us from these swoons of self-esteem; and they are terrible while they last. What wonder, then, that the thought of a perpetual syncope of that kind should make us behave unwisely sometimes?

This universal desire of pleasing, and in particular the branch of it which we have just now in view—that which principally concerns personal appearance—is far from deserving to be reckoned among our weaknesses, though we may blush to own it. It is rather a mark of weakness to disown it, especially as no one can ever do that with perfect truth. The pride that leads us to pretend indifference, is quite as mean as the unlawful arts, affectations, and sacrifices of modesty, which an undue anxiety to please sometimes prompts, and surely far less amiable. If we admire those who scorn to please by the usual means, it is only as we prize a new zoological variety—for its rarity, and for no grace or attractiveness, but rather the opposite. 'A scornful beauty' is only one who is less natural than her compeers; who fancies she has discovered a new power; a witchery more piquant to a certain class of observers. Take her at her word, or at the word of her looks and behavior, and you would bring her to terms very soon. Let her be neglected at one ball, or passed unnoticed in Broadway, and she will soon confess her share in the universal passion. There may indeed be found a class of egotists so imbued with self-esteem, as never to be conscious of a feeling amounting to a wish to please anybody; but this is because no doubt on the subject ever troubles them; and they have been life-long bores to all about them—a fate nowise enviable. Better be

teased with anxiety to please beyond the limit allotted us by nature. That is at least the more loveable extreme.

If we undertake the most imperfect examination of the means given us by which to accomplish this natural desire of pleasing, we shall be obliged to utter many commonplaces. We must say that a sweet and loving disposition stands foremost, even in considering looks; an inward feeling and habit of feeling which gives softness to the eyes, and delicacy to the lips: a warmth of cheerfulness and good will that lights up the face and smooths the brow: a sympathy whose glow gives color to the cheek, and tenderness to the voice: a hearty truthfulness, able to carry the most ordinary words right to the bottom of the heart, and fix them there, in quiet trust and sweet assurance. After all that has been said of 'fascination,' in connexion with handsome faces lacking this radiance of goodness and truth, hardly any one will seriously dispute that no 'set of features, or complexion, or tincture of a skin' will compensate for the soul of loveliness.

Yet these things have their charm, too; so great a charm, that we are always ready, at first, to fancy that all lies beneath them that should belong to them. A fair skin seems to bespeak a calm and pure mind; a clear, full eye, truth and innocence; a blushing, changing cheek, modesty and sensibility. Add to these rich and beautiful hair, white teeth, and a radiant smile, and throw over the whole the grace of symmetrical harmony, and we are prone to ascribe virtue to the owner of attractions so potent, or rather we accept the attractions, and take the virtues for granted. Mere beauty of form and color has much to do with the pleasure of social life; for we never can dissever from these the qualities they ought to bespeak.

Even dress has its value in increasing the pleasure of social inter-

course, or at least making some persons more acceptable to us than others. Few will dispute that very *outré* or coarse or ungraceful costume detracts from the pleasure they might feel in certain company, or that it is often truly mortifying when those we love appear in society ill-dressed; but we remember to have heard a lady go beyond this degree of candor, in saying that she could not help loving even her best friends the better for being elegantly dressed. We are not all willing to own as much; but is there not, in truth, something akin to this feeling, in the recollection of every person of taste? The sentiments are so intimately interwoven, that it is hard to define their boundaries. The pleasure we receive from the presence of the beloved, is enhanced or diminished by a thousand trifles; is not dress sometimes one of them? At least, we must confess, that where those we only like are concerned, it makes a good deal of difference.

We speak of dress as having *expression;*—as being sombre or the contrary, and affecting our spirits for the moment correspondingly. Bright and delicate colors are naturally agreeable to the eye, and conducive to cheerfulness; so much so that many persons, not willing to prolong the pain of sorrow, dislike to wear mourning, simply because of its influence on the spirits. To natures thus impressive, any dark uniformity of dress is unpleasing; they do not like even to invite guests who will be sure to come in gloomy colors. Bright tints are the natural symbols of joy, hope, gaiety; and the susceptible love none other. Their sensitiveness confesses the need of these among other defences against the insidious, creeping gloom of life, which ever threatens us, as the sands of Egypt every open space left unguarded.

Do we seem to have wandered from our theme? We have only been approaching it. The reason why growing old gracefully has

become a theme at all is, that there have been complaints that the art is not understood or the duty recognized. These complaints have been made by two classes,—the young and the old; not at all by those between youth and age. They are generally willing to let the matter pass *sub silentio*. But what is the ground of complaint? Twofold. With the young, who are buoyant, eager after their own objects, and—with mildness be it hinted—a little apt to be self-satisfied, it is that those who have passed through that stage are not quite willing enough to retire and leave a clear field for others. The intensity of interest with which the thoughts of *débutants* are fixed on themselves and their companions is such, that it seems to them somewhat impertinent in anybody else to live at all; unpardonable to show any unwillingness to subside into a state of hibernation, like other stupid animals. How unreasonable in ladies who have lost their bloom to claim attention! How tiresome in gentlemen old enough to desire sensible conversation, the attempt to occupy the time devoted to flirtation!

With the old, the reproach is generally still more severe. 'It is quite time to be leaving off such follies and thinking of something better.' Something better! Ah! there is the question. Is it better to let the charms of youth depart without an effort, to invite the steps of unlovely age, to forget the sympathies of early days, to forego the society of the gay and cheerful, to put ourselves in the way of becoming repulsive and censorious? Some people are constitutionally moping and dissatisfied, and these are apt to be very cross that everybody else is not so too. Tempers any gayer than their own are necessarily 'frivolous;' a relish for company which they are unfitted to enjoy, 'dissipated,' or 'light-minded.' To dress cheerfully and becomingly is considered as an attempt to affect youth; to converse gaily, an unsuitable effort to attract admirers. There is

really no limit to the ungracious things said and looked by some very dull people, who desire to get as many names as possible into their own category. Nothing would please them better than sumptuary laws which should proscribe certain colors, forms, and ornaments of dress after a certain age; and if the ordinance could be so devised as to prohibit laughing, and liveliness, and joining in youthful pleasures, from and after the same period, it would be still more gratifying. It were curious, but perhaps not profitable, to inquire whether the amusement vulgarly called backbiting, would be increased or diminished by such a law. Ah! those pale-green eyes! We imagine them fixed upon us as we make these daring suggestions, and our blood creeps as we write. We are ready to give in; but candor and duty oblige us to proceed with a few words for the weaker party.

Does not the unwillingness of the young to see their advantages shared by those who have not full claim to them show how keenly our common, human nature appreciates those advantages? And what prompts the sharp remark but a desire to monopolize them? Uncle Toby, when he put the troublesome fly out of the window, said, 'There is room enough in the world for thee and me.' Pity but the young could apply this. 'What a prodigious quantity of Charlotte-Russe E—— always eats!' said a certain person at supper. We need not say that the certain person was very fond of Charlotte-Russe. Virtuous indignation is very apt to have a little personal feeling at the bottom. If there were an unlimited amount of attention and admiration in every circle, so that each member of it could be supplied to heart's content, the moral aspect of wishing to be agreeable too late in life would not seem half so heinous to those who now satirize it. Public opinion visits with great severity all offences against property, because the public loves property above

all other things; and decorum is never so ferocious, as when unlawful appropriation of kind, or approving, or admiring, words and looks is in question; because even the decorous, in their secret hearts covet these things with an intensity which they are reluctant to own, and ill endure to see the general sum too much subdivided. We must pardon the hypocrisy, which is often quite unconscious.

'But unworthy arts are practised.' What are they? We have seen by what circumstances or qualities nature teaches us to please. One of the most prominent of these is personal appearance. The lapse of years steals the smoothness of the cheek and the rich color of the hair; gives perhaps too much roundness or its more undesirable opposite to the figure; changes even the expression of the mouth, by secret inroads upon the teeth; softens the once firm muscles, and thus impairs freedom and grace of movement; and in many other ways, more or less conspicuous, indicates that the body has culminated, passed its perfection, received a hint of decay. We are not forgetting for a moment that all these changes have nothing to do with decay of the mind; on the contrary, they are often the very signs of its ripening. The kernel grows sweeter as its shell dries and hardens. But no human creature is wholly indifferent to human beauty; and with our instinctive knowledge of this truth, it is as foolish to wish as it is unreasonable to expect that the moment of threatened loss should be that of indifference.

The young may be comparatively careless on the subject of good looks, for youth is beauty; yet even they are not often found wholly neglectful of the means of enhancing this great advantage. Why then grudge the use of dress and personal care to others who need it so much more? Even what may be called, *par excellence*, the *arts* of dress, are patronized by the young, or what would make our dress-makers such expert padders and lacers, our milliners so skilful

in the choice and mingling of colors and textures? Above all, how would our perfumers and cosmetic-venders make such speedy fortunes, if they were not patronized by the young? The would-be young are not a sufficiently numerous class to support half of them. Even our *coiffeurs* and dentists depend for their customers more upon the rising generation than upon the declining one. We would venture a guess that ten times as many lotions for improving the complexion, miraculous soaps to make soft white hands, dentifrices, depilatories, and capilline balms, are sold to damsels and youths under twenty, as are ever purchased by an equal number of people over forty. The truth is, that by the time that mature age is reached, most persons blessed with common sense have discovered that these outward appliances have very little power to improve, none at all to disguise. The idea that this power resides in anything yet invented by the ingenuity or cupidity of man belongs, only to the season of an intense and original verdancy. Nature, whose decree it is that every passing thought and emotion, every lapsing year, every illness, every grief, shall write itself legibly on face and form, takes care that nothing shall counteract her design. No arts are so sure to be baffled and exposed as cosmetic arts. It was only the other evening that we saw a lady of a certain age with a face and neck like ivory or alabaster, cheeks softly tinged with rose, and hair that rivalled jet in blackness and lustre. Her toilet had been most successful; but what was the result? Why, that the youngest and least practised eye in the room detected every imposture at a glance, and found the face as uninteresting as those revolving countenances in hairdressers' windows, glaring at you with a hideous, fixed smile, and eyes which have no speculation in them. 'Made up!' was the contemptuous sentence on every lip. The flattering assurance given to the poor lady by her glass was one of

those delusions by which the father of lies induces the victims of vanity to sign away their souls; which 'keep the word of promise to the ear, but break it to the sense;' conferring the coveted beauties but depriving them of all power to charm. Most melancholy are these errors, to the looker-on of any sensibility or kind feelings.

Deception with regard to age, then, we look upon as out of the question; what is left to quarrel with? Too much gaiety of dress or manner? Why, when gaiety of any kind is not too abundant in society, and too many people frequent it looking *memento mori* in every feature? We ought to be grateful to the few who can, from whatever motive, help to throw a little sunshine on society. If their light be slightly refracted, we are not to condemn it as spurious. Why is gaiety unsuitable after youth is passed? Only because we are not used to it. The tendency of life is to extinguish it;—of life, though never so prosperous and happy. Few have courage enough to cultivate cheerfulness of thought; still fewer, cheerfulness of behavior, which costs an effort. We have learned, therefore, to consider grave manners as alone suitable to mature years; and we are apt to antedate the period at which 'mature' years ought in conscience to be considered as begun. It is, after all, a strange jealousy this! It confesses its nature at every turning, yet it insists upon being considered the champion of virtue. That is an old trick of selfishness.

But when elderly people are accused of undue youthfulness of dress or manner, it is usually accompanied with some suspicion of a design upon the other sex. Is such design, then, the ground of gay dress and manner in the young? And if so, and it be considered innocent in them, is it contemptible in the more advanced? At what age is man or woman too old to desire happiness? If ill-success attend the forced buddings of this second spring, as it is

very likely to do, does it not constitute a sufficient punishment for the attempt to break through Nature's thorny hedges? If prosperity, then must we conclude the aspirant wise, the objector foolish, and—envious. Such things have been, and the satirists, left behind, have had to gnash their mental teeth in impotent vexation.

But, after saying thus much, it may be requisite for us to protest that we are quite aware of the truly ridiculous figure sometimes exhibited by an antiquated boy or superannuated girl who is weak enough to make spasmodic and ghastly efforts at the manners and appearance of youth. We have not a word to say in defence of these punchinelloes, but give them over to the tender mercies of Dickens, Thackeray, and other dissectors of human character and folly. They are usually people who never were anything but emptiness:

'A brain of feathers, and a heart of lead!'

Happily such instances are few, in our state of society, at least. For one aged butterfly we have a dozen prematurely old and morbidly grave people, who seem to think goodness and attractiveness incompatible, and amusement a weak, if not a sinful, indulgence. We feel sometimes almost ready to compound for a few belated friskers, by way of variety.

Allowing, however, that there are, even among us, some whom a desire of being agreeable betrays into unbecoming behavior,—for we would not be understood to insinuate that a fine instinct will not guide each period of life to a style of manners peculiarly suited to itself,—let us inquire to what temptation is the error owing. We have seen that the secret wish of every heart is to please,—to be acceptable,—to be sought. All like to be invited,—to read

in the eyes of those about them that their company gives pleasure. All dread the cold shoulder, the listless eye, the unready hand. None but a cynic chooses to be omitted when a party is made up, or put off with an apology instead of a visit. Now, in the very nature of things, the insidious approach of years must bring round the point at which such neglect will, under ordinary circumstances, be felt to begin. The changes of life separate us from our original companions, and bring us into contact with all ages. Perhaps it is our lot to find agreeable young people, and rather indolent or unsocial elder ones. But the young do not seek us naturally, unless we are in some degree conformed to them; unless we keep up a youthful interest in their pursuits, sympathize in their not always wise wishes, and lead them, by some sacrifice or accommodation, to forget the additional experience which might otherwise inspire some dread of our severer notions. Is not here an inducement—we will not say a temptation, for that implies wrong—to keep young as long as possible? Candid married ladies confess, sometimes, the secret pang with which they first found themselves left out when a 'young' party was made up,—the said young party consisting of the very friends and associates to whom they had been all in all but a little while before. Wherefore this omission? Because there was an idea of diminished or transferred sympathies. Far more cutting must be the first perception of a change of this sort to the unmarried, who can refer it only to the hopeless disadvantage of increasing years. These compulsory shadows on one's life must be chilling indeed. No wonder we should desire to keep on the sunny side of the Rubicon. If the young are disposed to sneer at those who are not willing to be old, let them rather cultivate in themselves a more humane feeling towards the frontier people,—dwellers in the Debatable Land, always an unquiet

position. Let them show less eagerness to monopolize youth, and others will be less eager to cling to it. Of all castes yet devised for partitioning society, this of years is the least dignified and the most offensive; and of all countries, this of ours, which professedly repudiates caste, is foremost in this division. It would seem as if the national youthfulness had expressed itself in the maxims of social life, making it, by the supreme law of fashion, un-American to be anything but young. What was Bryant thinking of, when he wrote, in one of the most glorious of his poems,—

> 'Oh, Freedom! thou art not, as poets dream,
> A fair, young girl, with light and delicate limbs,
> And wavy tresses!'?

Why, she 'isn't anything else!' if we may judge by the general aspect of most of our companies, where young girls (and boys) not only enjoy, but claim, the 'largest liberty,' allowing it to others in such modicums as they judge expedient. We are assured—but this we will not vouch for—that in certain quarters it is thought rather impertinent if mammas or married sisters do not withdraw into the shade on all occasions of reunion for merry doings. Travellers in the United States have repeatedly recorded their astonishment at this peculiar state of things:—that the approach to maturity incapacitates—and especially ladies—for American society. This is really enough to make one paint, patch, and powder; dye one's hair and eyebrows, and wear false curls and braids, teeth, beards, and mustaches; suffer the martyrdom of tight shoes on agricultural feet, obviate every awkward deficiency or redundance of nature with whalebone and cotton batting, and, in short do all those dreadful things which draw upon desperate people, disposed to catch at straws on the ocean of Time, the reproach of *not* grow-

ing old gracefully! Who likes to be laid on the shelf, and medicined there with such placebos as—'*Dear* Aunt Sally! she hates dress, and does so *love* to be alone!' or—'That *good* soul, Cousin Thomas! he is always pleased when others enjoy themselves, but he does not care for society!'—instead of hearty invitations?

It is a very odd thing, seeing that the course of time invariably robs everybody of youth, that those who are on the high road to age, and hoping with all their hearts to arrive there, should so hate every one of the inevitable milestones on the way. 'All men think all men mortal but themselves.' What an inexhaustible fund of jokes is afforded by the failing eyes of our friends! what rich amusement in rheumatism or corns! It seems not always to be easy for the sufferer to join in the laugh; but we liked the quiet answer of a friend whose white hairs were the subject of ridicule: 'Our blessings *brighten* as they take their flight!' One would think certain favored individuals had been insured against losses of this sort; but, among all the modes devised for equalizing the ills of life, there has not yet appeared one that offers remedy or indemnity for faded charms. If there were, what a prodigious run it would have! Those whose wit is rifest on these points—and there are some who really seem to enjoy the symptoms of decay in their best friends—would betray the latent dread of their own hearts by being first on the books. They would acknowledge the importance of being insured against ridicule and neglect during the period in which the aspect of age is as yet strange, and therefore unwelcome. Happily this season is not of very long duration, for it brings with it the pain common to all down-hill travelling before the muscles have become used to their new action.

This overweening estimate of youth bespeaks a low idea of the materials of which agreeable society should be composed. 'None

grow old,' says Madame Rahel, 'but they *who were never anything but young.*' The qualities which make people agreeable in the highest degree are those with which age latest interferes; and if there have originally been anything of value in the mind, experience must ripen and bring it to perfection. Information increases with years with all but absolute fools; and sympathy need not be lessened if the trials of life be put to their best use. Impetuosity may have faded; but if in its stead,

'Years that bring the philosophic mind'

bring also patience, consideration, allowance, judgment, and kindly feeling, why need we regret it? If we have fewer prejudices, greater facility of generous admiration, more accurate and cultivated taste, a wider range of interest; if, in parting with a portion of our early fire, we have lost none of our genial warmth; if the friends that remain are the more precious because of those who are gone, and this life the more beautiful inasmuch as we have learned to discern more clearly its connection with another: surely we should not be dismissed from the social circle because our outward grace and transitory bloom have fled; cast on the stream of Time, like dead garlands after a festival—fit only to prepare the soil for other flowers equally fleeting. At the period of middle life of which we speak, the good have earned the right to be plain without being considered repulsive; if they cannot beautify society, they may at least adorn it. Dancing they may think proper to lay aside, but for conversation they are better fitted than ever, and even the young cannot always dance. Music is not yet prohibited to the mature, nor the hundred fireside games that make the winter's evening pass so merrily. Flirtation may be a little out of season with them, but does not this make them all the more desirable companions for a

certain class of young people, who could hardly bear to share their chief pleasure with even their dearest friends? . . .

If we had power to sketch our ideal of one who is learning to take worthily the first steps on the down-hill of life, we should, it is true, mingle no inconsiderable leaven of seriousness with the cheerful light we love to see thrown over the character. Sadness and sweetness are not, in our view, irreconcileable; indeed we think sometimes of a sweet sadness as something fascinating beyond the gaiety which carries with it an unpleasant suspicion of blunted sensibilities. Yet we desire no morbid seriousness. We ask sunshine from the heart; true, loving sympathy with young and old, the dear result of reflection and kind offices; an intelligent interest in every possible improvement; an incessant cultivation of every talent and faculty, joined with a love of imparting that makes it impossible to withhold; a power of self-adaptation, the growth of active, moulding affection:—and constant employment for all these qualifications. If we are for no exclusions, we are for no sinecures; if we would have our friends sought, we would also have them worth seeking. No *fainéants* in the field! Good and true *devoir* and service, as well as an honorable place at the feast!

THE GRAVEYARD

# THE TOWN POOR.

A WESTERN REMINISCENCE.

It is somewhat difficult, amid the conventionalisms of great cities, to remember that mere humanity, ungraced by wealth or station, and destitute of the talent by which these are to be acquired, has any claim to respect or consideration. A pauper, among us, is a mere animal, whose physical necessities a certain prejudice obliges us to supply, but whose extinction would be a decided advantage to all concerned, himself included, though there is unfortunately no provision in our laws for putting out of the world those who are merely superfluous in it.

A lady observed, last summer, that it was delightful, during the abundant fruit season, to see every poor little beggar about the markets with a fine peach or watermelon. 'Why,' said her friend, in all simplicity, 'did you think they would eat so much as to kill themselves?'

This was the thought that suggested itself to a rich and not unfeeling person, on hearing that paupers were enjoying fruit. In the country, and especially in the new country, people feel so differently, with all their coarseness!

We had only one confessedly 'poor' family in the town during

the half dozen years of our residence in the West. This was the household of a stout, healthy carpenter, with a bed-ridden wife, and a good many chubby children. At first the man struggled feebly against fate, but he was too insurmountably lazy and inefficient to supply, by extra effort, the deficiency occasioned by his wife's condition. His step was always slow and heavy, except when the dinner-horn sounded when he was at work for some thriving farmer. At home, it was said, poor fellow, that he never knew what dinner was, but took bread and milk, morning, noon, and night, the year round. At his work he was a very snail, measuring and measuring, and, after all, going wrong, and spoiling all by mere absence of mind and forgetfulness. So, of course, work became scarce with him.

Meanwhile, his wife was always on the bed, except when she wanted something to eat; and she was reported to have an admirable appetite. The neighbors said a good many hard things about her being able to exert herself when anything excited her; but she insisted that she had a weakness in her back about as large as a knitting-needle, which prevented her doing any kind of work, active or sedentary, though she could manage occasionally to go to a tea-drinking, or net herself a smart cap or collar when there was to be a quarterly meeting.

This did pretty well while the poor carpenter could pay his way, and keep all the hungry mouths supplied with something in the way of food. But by and bye indolence, and improvidence, and dirt, and poor fare, did their work upon him, and he was gradually incapacitated for work, and reduced to the necessity of asking aid from the town. After this the waters soon closed over his head. Debts pressed—sickness came—hope (for this world) was extinct. Happily, even in this darkness, a light came forth from the future to gild the downward path of the pauper,—(paupers have *souls*, in

the country,)—and he turned his eyes from the wretched present to the far better life to come, and welcomed Death as a kindly messenger, sent by his Heavenly Father to release him from a world of woe. No death-bed so poor that this spirit of love and hope cannot curtain it with glorious light, converting its very penury into an earnest of good things in store for the soul which has received 'evil things' on this side the grave.

There is perhaps no occasion on which the rougher sort of people appear to better advantage than in circumstances of illness and death in the neighborhood. Misfortunes of a different kind occurring among their friends do not always awaken the sympathy we should expect, perhaps because there is some truth in Rochefoucault's famous maxim, that there is something in the misfortunes of others which is not disagreeable to us; and the untaught do not conceal this infirmity as cunningly as we do. Pecuniary misfortunes are pitied by a curious scale of estimates. If a man is cheated out of his farm, so that he is obliged to 'pull up stakes' and go off to Wisconsin or elsewhere, very little commiseration is felt for him. It passes as one scene in the great drama of life; a crook which may come in any man's lot; a new and therefore not entirely undesirable experience; an opportunity of seeing the world; an excuse for 'going West,' an ever-present dream with all Western people. If heavy rains destroy the harvest, when all has promised golden abundance, the misfortune is shared so widely that it is borne without special complaint, since misery not only loves company but is consoled by it. If the miller's dam break away, so that it requires all the men in the neighborhood to build it up again, it is not in human nature to expect any great sympathy, for who is sorry for a good 'job?'

But let a fox come in and eat up a brood of young geese, or a

weasel suck a whole nest of promising eggs; let the rats make havoc in the pile ef rolls from the carding-mill, or the best cow get too much clover, and the talk of the whole neighborhood will run on nothing else until some new accident happens. Perhaps it will be said that it is because these misfortunes fall within the female province that words are lavished about them. As to that we cannot say. But it is certain that they seem to make more impression on the general mind.

For all that touches health or life, however, there is an ever-ready, warm, overflowing and active sympathy, which education and refinement could hardly improve, even if education and refinement were always free from certain haunting influences which sometimes mar their inherent beneficence. Delicacy, taste, disinterestedness, tenderness, may be lacking at other times among the uninstructed; when the hand of God touches 'the bone and the flesh' of any member of the community, all these things come, by a beautiful instinct, just in proportion as they are needed. There is even a sort of awe of the sick, and this among people whose organ of reverence is usually anything but morbidly sensitive. They gaze upon the sufferer reflectingly, and as he perceptibly nears the borders of the dark valley, this awe is deepened, until it seems as if the outskirts of that world upon which clouds and darkness rest, cast a shadow on the face of the attendants around the sick bed. And this reverential or awe-stricken feeling is not to be ascribed to a mere fear of death; for *this*, strange to say, is not a trait among such people, probably because their imaginations are unawakened. It is a sense of spiritual reality; a bringing home of the assurances of the pulpit; an effort to contemplate the unknown, which seems brought within ken by a connecting link in the person of the dying.

At least such is the appearance. Although not untinged by superstition, it is a truly religious awe.

But in cases which are far from being extreme, or even dangerous, a high degree of sympathy is felt, and the most active, ingenious and self-sacrificing kindness exhibited. The remedies prescribed and offered might excite a smile, to be sure; but we will not touch upon them now. In seasons of general or prevalent disease, it not unfrequently occurs that a whole neighborhood will be so worn out with night-watching that there is not one left who is well enough for this most onerous service. In that case what riding and driving is there, to fetch unexhausted nurses from more fortunate parts of the country! No labor or sacrifice is thought too great for this end, since vigils are a part of the religion of country people. When the most luxurious citizen would not think it necessary to have one sitting up to be ready *in case* he should awake and wish a drink, the backwoodsman would think himself ill-used if he had not one or two 'watchers,' for whom a regular meal is always set, and who often have nothing to do but see the sick man sleep all night. It is not this injudicious zeal which we recommend as an example.

When death enters a family, however, the sensation is felt throughout a whole wide neighborhood. No business goes on as usual. Every voice is softened; every countenance saddened. Arrangements are made to put by business as much as possible, that there may be leisure to assist in the last duties. These last duties are not simplified by the intervention of professional people as they are in older settlements. Everything has to be considered, planned and provided for, by the neighbors and friends, at no little cost of time and trouble. It is often necessary to send several miles to obtain suitable material for the coffin, as this is a point of much interest; and it would be considered highly disrespectful and unkind

to the bereaved to neglect such a mark of respect. The other offices necessary at such times are all performed in the same spirit, and all in the most quiet and delicate manner, without a question asked of the mourning family, if it be possible to avoid this. The house is prepared for the funeral, conveyances provided, distant friends summoned; all, in short, is done, with what seems an instinct of goodness. The coarse man of yesterday is to-day a gentle brother, full of untaught but most touching refinement. The neighborhood gossip, whose visits have been a terror, is transformed to an active, useful, quiet friend; stepping about on tip-toe, and refusing no office, however unpleasant, which can aid the general purpose. Some good soul whose personal services are not needed in the house, will, without a word, take the children to her own home, and devote herself to them; while another will occupy herself in preparing nice things in the way of food, that there may be wherewithal to entertain the numerous family of assistants and guests usually congregated on such occasions, without unpleasant bustle in the house of affliction.

The last ceremonies are very similar everywhere. The universal heart speaks out in sympathy with the bereaved, who are about to commit their loved ones to the earth, even in the most artificial society, where every other feeling seems moulded, if not chilled, by fashion. True, gushing tears and melting hearts, attest the great brotherhood of humanity, even in circles from which the thought of death seems habitually shut out. In the country this is prolonged by prayers and hymns, and sometimes by the very protracted preaching of the clergyman—a painful practice, since emotion is necessarily exhausting, and there is a sort of blank which occurs after it has subsided, unfavorable to the tender associations that called it forth.

The public leave-taking customary in the country is an exception to the general good taste and delicacy which prevails on these occasions. Nothing can be imagined more distressing for the friends, or more embarrassing to the spectators, than the custom of leading up every member of the family to take a last look at the beloved remains before they are forever removed from the light of day. How this could ever have been judged proper, is indeed a mystery.

The procession consisting of all the wagons and carriages of the neighborhood, filled with whole families—since women and even children are included—is always a most beautiful and interesting sight, as it winds slowly through the woods and dells, now crossing a rustic bridge, now passing the brow of a hill. Let the distance be ever so great, the same deferential pace is preserved, and the assistants refrain religiously from conversation on indifferent subjects. Death is with them not only a solemn but a sacred thing. Its presence hushes for the time all worldly thoughts, and brings eternity to view. Such should be its salutary influence everywhere. If we viewed it aright, would the rebellious heart so often ask—Why must it be?

The burial ground in the new country is usually on a hill-side, enclosed with a rough fence, and encumbered often with stumps left from the original clearing. The graves are wholly unornamented except here and there a bit of wooden railing, and rarely, a head and foot-stone. Generally two pieces of board supply the place of these; the name and age of the deceased being painted upon the larger one. Not unfrequently a bit of unpainted wood, with letters marked by some one who can scarce write, is all! No attempt at shrubbery, not even a solicitude for removing the rubbish which encumbers all newly-cleared lands. Grief has not yet sought the aid of Taste to soften its recollections. The idea of beautifying the

cemetery is the slow result of civilization and refined thought. Superstition used to ask the shadow of the church, for its dead; and this accorded well with the practice of continued prayers for the parted soul. Our usage seems more simple, more in accordance with our religious belief; yet the other had a tender appeal in it, and commends itself to the feelings of all those who have suffered deeply. How inseparably is the idea of the Divine Omnipotence connected with our bereavements! How distinctly we feel in parting with our loved ones, that we are committing them to that faithful and just One, who is able to keep them for us, and to re-unite us with them. Of all the funeral hymns that have ever been written, perhaps none expresses the sentiment of the hushed but trembling heart of the mourner so well as that beautiful one:

'Unveil thy bosom, faithful tomb!
Take this new treasure to thy trust,
And give the sacred relics room
To slumber in their kindred dust.

'Nor pain, nor grief, nor anxious fear
Invades thy bounds;—no mortal woes
Can reach the peaceful sleeper here,
While angels watch the soft repose.

'So Jesus slept;—God's dying Son
Passed through the grave, and blessed the bed.
Rest here! blest saint! till from his throne
The morning break and pierce the shade.'

At the grave there is generally a prayer and further exhortation; but usually after the coffin is lowered, and the earth partly replaced, the nearest relative of the deceased, or the clergyman at his request, thanks the company for their kindness and their reverent attendance,

and so dismisses them—a custom which, primitive as it sounds in description, has yet a grace and beauty to the unprejudiced observer. It is especially appropriate where so many of the individuals present have given their attention, their personal services, their sighs and tears, from the beginning to the end of the sad period. To express a feeling of obligation in such a case is both natural and proper, and finishes tenderly what has been a matter of feeling throughout.

None can know without actual experience, the deep teachings of the most unpolished rustic life. But to return.

The funeral of this poor worn out creature was an occasion of as much interest in the neighborhood as if he had been a rich proprietor. The dignity of human nature was acknowledged by all, without a grudge on the score of pauperism. Tears flowed freely at the leave-taking, before the coffin was closed, and the widow was handed into the best carriage, with the respect due to deep affliction.

But here the pathetic aspect of this case fades at once. The recollections of poor Mrs. Crindle's consciousness of her new mourning —the airs with which she arranged and re-arranged her veil—the pullings on and off of the black gloves—the flutterings of the unaccustomed white handkerchief—are far too vivid to allow of any dwelling upon the solemnities of the scene. The kindness of her friends had arrayed her in a complete outfit for the occasion, and although some of the articles were only lent for the funeral, the mere appearing in them was too delicious to allow Mrs. Crindle to view the occasion as anything but a grand pageant in which she, after all her seclusion, was the observed of all observers. If she thought of poor Crindle at all, it was probably only to regret he could not have seen his own funeral, and herself the grandest feature of it.

A question soon arose as to Mrs. Crindle's support. She had

seven children, and not one of them able to earn a living. One son was lame, through the rickets, and him it was his mother's ambition to bring up as a school-master. She said he had a big head to hold learning, and that his arms were strong if his legs were weak. This was for the future, however. The present concern was subsistence, and here a series of argumentations, not to say altercations, ensued between Mrs. Crindle and the town-officers. The functionaries, potent in a brief authority, insisted that Mrs. Crindle should do something, however little, towards her own support; she maintained as stoutly that she neither could nor would do any such thing. She had never worked during her husband's lifetime, and she was not going to begin now. She had a family of helpless children, and it was the duty of the town to see that they did not starve. Nobody could prove that she ever had worked, and she took good care not to put such proof in any one's power by making the slightest effort.

A proposition was made to 'put out' the children, but to this the mother declared she never would consent. What! let her poor little dears go to live with strangers, when they had never been separated from her for a day—the thing was out of the question! She would see them starve first. But Mr. Zeiber, the Dutch poor-master, though he shrunk from the rattling storm which the proposition brought about his ears, was not to be silenced very easily, and matters came to such a pass, that Mrs. Crindle declared if she could only get to her own people, in 'York State,' she wouldn't be beholden to nobody that begrudged her a living! Her folks were respectable, and wouldn't see her want for anything if they had her and her children among them.

'They shall have you!' was the immediate and hearty reply, and as soon as the idea was fairly set on foot in the community, a gener-

ous enthusiasm seemed to pervade the neighborhood. The needful clothing for the widow and orphans was speedily provided. The guardians of the poor kindled with the unwonted warmth; the loose cash in their hands was liberally appropriated for travelling expenses; and, to make assurance doubly sure, a trusty agent was appointed as companion for the journey, with directions to pay all expenses, handing over only the balance to the lady, lest some unfortunate financial error should prevent the safe transportation of these interesting members of the community to York State.

This arrangement was substantially agreeable to Mrs. Crindle; how could it be otherwise? A journey to the East! The very sound makes western ears tingle, especially when the events of a western residence have been such as to throw no golden hue over the new country. And here that Elysian prospect, a visit eastward, was offered to Mrs. Crindle, the very last person in our whole community for whom such a blessing was supposed to be in reserve. That Mrs. Crindle, emphatically *poor* Mrs. Crindle, should be so favored, when the wives of some of our best (technically *best*) citizens had been trying for the same thing for years in vain! It was supposed that her cup must be full—nay, that it overflowed!

Yet, whose cup is without the bitter drop? whose feast without some death's head? whose villa without a pea-hen? Not Mrs. Crindle's. The guardian of the poor, (officially, *poor-master*—what an undemocratic term!) refused her at the outset the use of her money! Monstrous! to know that another had money—real money—belonging to her, who had hardly ever had a whole dollar at once—in his pocket, yet she herself not be allowed to touch it! She was not in the dark in the matter. She knew for certain that funds almost unlimited—amounting, at least, to twenty-nine dollars and fifty-nine cents, had been collected for the travelling expenses

of herself and children, and she had looked forward to its possession, on the morning of her departure, as the happiest moment of her life. How overwhelming the discovery that Mr. Linacre, who had been chosen to superintend the interests of the unfortunate, and at the same time to take care that the public purse received no unnecessary detriment, was to be purse-bearer, regulating, entirely at discretion, the expenditure of the journey! Who could tell what great things her management might have done with so enormous a sum as twenty-nine dollars, (to say nothing of the cents.) She was already planning a new bonnet for Jemimy Jane, and thinking how pretty George Washington would look in a pair of high-heeled boots; and of the comforts of a whole pound of candy, (it comes so cheap by the quantity!) for the solace of the party on the journey. A widow's cap was of course the proper thing to travel in; and, though Mrs. Brooke had sent her one, the hems were not half broad enough, and a new one could be bought for next to nothing at Detroit. These, and a thousand more of brilliant visions, had danced before her mind's eye times innumerable. Now, what a change! She not to be trusted with her own money!

Now, our poor-master was admirably fitted for his office—that of providing for the poor, without the public feeling the burden. He was not naturally hard-hearted, even towards the poor, who are, as everybody knows, our natural enemies; but his doctrine was, (and it is everywhere a popular one,) that those who take care of themselves do not need help, and those who do not, don't deserve it. Some ill-conditioned people, indeed, would say that Mr. Zieber was chosen because he was deaf, and so could with difficulty be made to hear the cries of the needy, and lame, and therefore moved but slowly to their relief. But this we repudiate as mere town scandal. He showed alacrity enough in forwarding Mrs. Crindle's departure.

When the town was to be relieved of a burden, his lameness proved no obstacle. Economy is the only virtue we recognize in our public men.

Mr. Linacre was deaf, too; at least so it seemed to poor Mrs. Crindle, whose hints, inuendos, and longings, openly or covertly expressed, as they passed through sundry villages rich in shops, went by him as the idle wind, and never produced even so much as an answer. Wise Mr. Linacre! If he had attempted to argue, he had been lost. Nobody wearing the form of man could have resisted the widow's strong reasons.

Happily the younger members of the party shared none of their mother's cares and anxieties. They had, to be sure, heard something of a large sum of money, but they showed no remembrance of it save asking occasionally for 'that 'ere candy.' They were too full of enjoyment to long for anything they had not. To ride all day! To visit parts unknown, when they had never been more than three or four miles from home before! When the wagon came to the door, they could not wait till the poor moveables, (*truck*, the farmer not inaptly called them,) were stowed, but sprang in, and took a foretaste of the journey, while waiting for the preparations to be completed. When once in motion, their shouts of merry laughter would have warmed any heart but an old bachelor's. At view of the first village, an involuntary exclamation burst forth at the sight of the frame houses. 'What a lot of barns!'* they never having seen any large frame buildings, except barns. When they reached the railroad, everything was like a wild dream, and they seemed as if their little wits must be unsettled. 'How are they going to get that house along with so many folks in't?' said one. 'Is that a burying?' asked another, staring at the

*Verbatim.

train. The whistle almost paralyzed them, and when they soon began to be tired and sleepy, they actually fancied in their bewilderment that the houses and fences were flying away, while they themselves stood still. It was strange, all strange; and they began to wonder if it was really the same world they had been living in all this time.

The great Lake steamer was another world still, and the blowing off seemed a forewarning of a worse fate than they had ever learned about in the Catechism. In short, the pauper child is like any other child, when he is where he dare be anything but a crushed worm; and one blessed good of the wild West is the recognition of his share in the common humanity.

But we spare our readers further detail of the incidents of the journey. It is enough to say, that the young ones did not recover from their astonishment, nor the mother from her just indignation at what she considered the unworthy conduct of Mr. Linacre in the suppression of her funds, by means of which she lost several great bargains, things having been offered her (she was assured by the sellers,) cheaper than was ever before known. The consequence of all this was, that she had to travel to the East in unsuitable apparel, which she well knew was the subject of unfavorable remarks among her fellow-passengers; for she saw them whispering together, and knew it must be about her. Another hardship of which she bitterly complained was, that she had no presents to carry to her friends at the East, who wonld reasonably expect something, as she had been away from them so long. Then the children, poor things, it certainly was very hard that she could not buy them anything, when she had money—or ought to have it if she had her rights,—and everything so cheap, too! But Mr. Linacre was like the dumb idols who 'have ears but hear not—mouths have they,

but they speak not—' and he held fast the deposits until they reached the end of the journey. It needed a good deal of inquiry to discover the residence of the 'respectable' relatives of Mrs. Crindle, as the place had grown so much during her absence that she found herself quite at a loss as to localities. As 'respectability,' in Mr. Linacre's estimation, as well as that of the world in general, had something to do with streets and houses, the quest was begun in the more showy neighborhoods, and at what might be called the Court End; but here no account could be obtained of the widow's friends. From the wide streets to the narrow—from these to the lanes—to the by-ways—trooped our weary wayfarers, and in one of the poorest of these last, and in the poorest hovel in it, the 'respectables' were at last unearthed. The hut was in no particular better than the one Mrs. Crindle had quitted at the West; and, in fact, greatly resembled it, except that boards held the place of logs, and an uneven brick hearth the place of an uneven stone one. Mr. Linacre stood aghast at the sight of the wretched poverty to which he had brought his wards, and it struck him at once as not improbable that the worthy board at home had been preciously humbugged—and that by one of their own paupers. He witnessed, however, a warm greeting from the old father, although this was somewhat qualified by the sour looks of a hard favored step-mother, who evidently counted, at the first glance, the number of mouths that were thus suddenly added to the consumers at the paternal board. But he kept his own counsel. Where would be the use of getting up a scene with Mrs. Crindle now? She had said her family were 'respectable'—whose family is not respectable, six hundred miles off? And why were n't they as respectable as anybody's folks, she said, when Mr. Linacre seemed inclined to charge her with having blinded the Western folks a

little. 'None of 'em have ever been in jail; and if they have n't lived as well as other folks, that was n't their fault; they had lived on the best they could get. And more than all, grandfather was a revolution sojer; and if they were a little down in the world now, what of it? They might be up before long, just as their neighbors were.' As to imposing on people, Mrs. Crindle thought she was the one imposed upon, for she had not had the use of her own money.

Mr. Linacre, as we have hinted, thought it prudent to avoid further discussion, and after paying over the balance of the twenty-nine fifty-nine, (amounting only to a few shillings, to Mrs. Crindle's inexpressible surprise and indignation,) he took his leave—not very proud of his achievement. What became of the rest of that money, the widow never could imagine, unless, as she observed, Mr. Linacre 'drank it, unbenownst.'

On his return to our neighborhood, Mr. Linacre, though sufficiently communicative as to the incidents of the journey, and particularly jocular in his description of a visit to the Episcopal Church at Detroit, where one of the children observed it was the biggest school-house he ever saw, but wondered why the minister wore his white nightgown, yet avoided condescending upon any particulars as to the state in which he found matters and things among Mrs. Crindle's respectable relatives. He probably had certain misgivings as to the final result of the expedition, as it was likely to concern the tax payers of the town of P——; but he said nothing, preferring to await the development in the course that the affairs of the poor are likely to take.

Time rolled on. We heard nothing of Mrs. Crindle, and the town was pauperless, save for the two orphan boys of a not 'respectable' mother who had absconded from our bounds. Mr.

Linacre, doubtless, began to hope that some favorable turn at 'the East,' matrimony perhaps—had relieved us forever of the carpenter's family, when a wagon, loaded like the departing one described some pages since, rolled briskly through the village, and stopt at the tavern; whence flew like wildfire the annunciation, 'The Crindles have come back!'

Come back! after all the trouble of getting them off—all the sewings, the givings, the contrivings; the complete outfit, as the villagers thought it, though Mrs. Crindle complained much of the deficiencies and unhandsomenesses. There they were again. The anthorities of the town of Q——, County of Cattaraugus, State of New York, had met, and concluded that they had subjects enough of their own; and that if they assisted the father, it belonged to others to look after the daughter; and, accordingly, ascertaining that she had 'a residence' at the West, they had despatched her and hers at once, under the care of a trusty person, back to the woods; demanding from our town not only travelling expenses, but physician's fees and sundry other charges, amounting to no inconsiderable sum, not to be raised without many words and sour looks, if it do not lead to a lawsuit between the two towns, one of which claims damages for 'sending the said widow to be by it maintained,' which the other refuses absolutely, averring that 'the said widow went of her own free will and accord, without compulsion or advice of the town authorities, whereupon said town joins issue,' &c., &c.

The widow herself is meanwhile the most unconcerned person in the town. She declares that she had a delightful visit, and wouldn't have missed of it for anything. The 'charitable,' who contributed so readily to the outfit, feel a little sore; but all join in the laugh at the widow's triumph, and agree to hold themselves outwitted.

## THE VILLAGE SCHOOL.

How many of the rulers and magnates of this 'wonderful country,' look back to the district school as the nursery of the tender germs of their greatness! How many a judge can recollect when he earned a rap with the rattan by spelling law, *lor*, or jumping over the bench when he ought to have been sitting quietly upon it! How many a governor imbibed his first notion of the dignity of office, from the grand air of the schoolmaster, as he paced the floor with the whip over his shoulder, rolling his eyes magisterially, now on this side, now on that, giving, ever and anon, a brief word of command, or stopping, in awful silence, before some negligent scholar. How majestic appeared that functionary, even without his coat; how enviable the awful sway he exercised over his charge! Some ill-considered word—some unjust judgment—some sincere and earnest exhortation of those days, may have influenced, for good or ill, the moral character of all present. How important, then, is the agency of the village-school. Is it not wonderful that we Americans, a practical people, should take so little pains to make it what it should be!

Our little realm has been swayed by masters and mistresses of all degrees of qualification and deficiency. When the logs were yet so

new that the aromatic odor of the tamarack was still fresh and delightful; the desks unhacked; the benches four-legged; the floor undespoiled of its knots—we had Miss Cynthia Day, a damsel of few personal charms, and little superfluous learning. She came amply recommended from a neighboring town, as 'a young woman of good parts and behavior,' and so indeed we found her; but her parts were not the parts of speech.

'Silas!' she would drawl out, 'Si-ilas! let them 'are what's'er names be, dew! You'll git it, if you don't!'

She was an excellent aid at a quilting, especially as she was left-handed, and therefore good at corners; and she sang in meeting, with such good-will, and in so nasal a style, that it sounded as if some one was blowing an accompaniment through a comb, as is sometimes done at village merry-makings.

But her reign scarcely lasted out the summer. She was too good-natured; and, moreover, took so much snuff that the little ones sneezed and cried when they stood by her knee to say their lessons. She was dismissed, with some civil excuses, and found a more fitting vocation as a tailoress, to which business, indeed, she was bred.

The winter brought us Mr. Hardcastle, a young divinity student from a neighboring village; a sober and down-looking person, who spoke softly, and moved with great deliberation. He had never taught school before, and was regularly examined before the proper functionaries. He spelt all the words in the spelling-book—that is, all the trap-words in which the examiners sought to catch him—to the great astonishment of all present; defined 'Orthography,' and 'Ratiocination,' and did the sum on the last page of the arithmetic; so no possible objection could be made to him. But he, poor fellow, was too delicate in mind and body for the place; and before

the spring opened he was obliged to leave us, with a bad cough, and a face paler than when he came. He did not live to finish his studies, and we have always supposed that that uproarious school hastened his end.

The lady who succeeded him had a very angular nose, and the thinnest of thin lips, and the sharpest of sharp eyes. She was a disciplinarian. Woe to the unlucky damsel who blotted her copy, or the truant wight that stayed too long when he was sent for water! That little rattan was never still; and Miss Pinkey had an ingenious instrument of torture, which consisted of a split quill, that she placed on the ear of the offender, and then stuck him up on the desk, a spectacle to the school. If the offence was rank, the quill was exchanged for a small hickory twig, which being split and made to pinch the ear, produced such sounds as may be heard when a pig is caught unawares in a gate;—music which was seemingly pleasant in the ears of Miss Pinkey. A slate held out at arm's length, or a book balanced on the head, varied the scene occasionally; until the school ma'am established such order in school, and such confusion and anger in the neighborhood, that every body was glad when the approach of winter gave an opportunity to dismiss so efficient a teacher.

All this time the 'education' of the district had not made very encouraging progress. Reading, writing and arithmetic remained at a low ebb, while truancy and mischief had reached a formidable pass. It was considered high time to do something decided for the welfare of the rising community; and accordingly steps were taken to procure a master from a certain town in the neighborhood, where the schools had acquired high reputation for order and progress. The sum of sixteen dollars per month was a great deal to pay, but the teacher in question would hear of nothing less; and as he was

to find his own board, and, would of course select the house of one of the committee as his home, the arrangement was at length made, after much debate and difficulty. Mr. Ball was engaged, and the school-house scrubbed out, the door new hung so that it would shut, and every broken pane of glass either replaced, or patched so that it was as good as new. There was some talk of new mudding the school-house before the cold weather came on, but that could not be carried. It was argued that with woods all round that wanted clearing, it was never worth while to have houses made too tight.

On the first Monday in November, Mr. Ball made his appearance, dressed in a new blue suit, with a yellow waistcoat, and abundance of shining brass buttons. His hair was brushed into a topknot or rather a cock's comb, after the mode of twenty years ago, and his cheeks were as red as two great Spitzenberg apples. He wore a monstrous watch, with a very conspicuous steel chain and brass key, and this cumbrous apparatus was frequently drawn out and consulted, as if every moment of his time was incalculably precious—a circumstance which had its due effect upon the company, wherever he might happen to be. In short, Mr. Ball was a blusterer, who was more intent on impressing those about him with a high idea of his personal consequence, than on performing the duties expected of him. In the school he put on a most lordly air, and at first struck the scholars with awe; but children are too discerning to be long deceived, and they began, before a great while, to take advantage of the master's foibles, and to be as idle and negligent as ever.

Yet he was not altogether a King Log either. After unbending so far as to tell the scholars long stories, in which he himself always made a most heroic figure; and enjoying their wondering comments and facetious remarks, he would suddenly change his tone, and order every one to resume his studies, at the same time declaring in

a tremendous voice, 'I am Napoleon in my school!' which the boys understood as a threat against whoever should dare to smile in the ranks.

This course produced some sensation among the parents, who were a good deal puzzled to interpret a character which seemed compounded of such incongruous qualities. Some thought 'too much book-larnin' made fools of people; others that Mr. Ball, having had a 'select-school' of his own, could not be expected to lay out all his powers upon a district school. One good lady suspected that the master was in love; another was afraid he drank. Theories abounded, but no satisfactory result could be obtained, since the conclusion of to-day was swept away by the new freak of to-morrow.

It happened that the house of Mr. Entwistle, one of the school-inspectors, had been chosen by Mr. Ball as a home; and Mr. Entwistle had half a dozen mischievous daughters, who were always spreading some story of the master's queer doings. They declared however small might be the bit of candle with which they furnished him at bed-time, he always had light in his room until midnight; and the story was corroborated by the notorious fact that it was impossible to make noise enough to arouse Mr. Ball before eight o'clock in the morning, when he swallowed the half-cold breakfast reserved for him by Mrs. Entwistle, and had but just time to reach the school-house before the clock struck nine. This encroachment upon country customs produced much remark; for nothing is so universal among settlers as very early hours both at evening and morning.

The girls at Mr. Entwistle's had made many a sly attempt to discover what it was that occupied Mr. Ball so late at night, but never could find an article of any description about the room, everything being carefully shut up in a large chest with a prodigious lock and

hinges whose clasps half covered the top, as if to secure untold treasures. In vain did they raise false alarms to bring the master down stairs; peep through the key-hole when they heard the great lock turn; and contrive reasons why the mysterious chest must be opened in their presence. Mr. Ball walked unconscious, and was as if he heard them not. When asked the direct question—as we blush to say he was more than once—as to what the great chest had in it, he answered simply, 'Nothing much.'

This was not to be endured. Any attempt at privacy is considered *prima facie* evidence of guilt; and it began to be whispered that there must be something very wrong about Mr. Ball's chest.

Now when Western people begin to suspect, they never stop half way. No trifles are ever thought of; but if a man is suspected of anything, it is as likely to be of stealing, counterfeiting, or any one of the seven deadly sins, as of any venial offence. So ere long the opinion began to be entertained that it was *somebody's* duty to find out what was in the chest, in order to come at the master's reasons for sitting up so late at night.

This idea once started, it was not difficult to decide upon the act; and on a Saturday afternoon, when the schoolmaster was congratulating himself upon having finished his week's work, and had locked his door in his usual mysterious manner, he was surprised to be called down stairs to a visitor.

The most 'efficient' man in our neighborhood was Deacon Bradley; not a *bona fide* deacon, but so-called because he exercised a sort of half paternal, half spiritual jurisdiction on the score of his own strictness, and the fact that he occasionally exhorted in meeting when no minister was present. This worthy person had been selected as the spokesman of those whose consciences were troubled on account of the supposed misdeeds of Mr. Ball. He sat with

Mr. Entwistle in the 'square room,' and both received Mr. Ball with an air at once solemn and fidgetty. They felt sure that they were in the right path, guarding the morals of the community; yet they certainly felt a little misgiving as to how the master would relish their interference in his affairs. So they hum'd and ha'd—to use Mr. Ball's own account of the scene—and dwelt so long upon the state of the weather and the prospects for next summer, that the delinquent began to conclude the visit was intended simply as a mark of respect, and his natural swell was doubtless not a little increased.

At length, however, Deacon Bradley approached the real subject, by means of some very adroit remarks upon the dreadful effects of wickedness in general, and especially of certain particular offences at which he more than hinted. Mr. Ball assented to all these observations with great readiness, adding gratuitously some severe strictures of his own on the sins in question. The deacon then touched upou irregular habits as very apt to lead to evil; very soon came down upon late hours as belonging to this class, and closed a somewhat formal address by a direct charge upon the schoolmaster of setting a bad example, and exciting the suspicion of the neighborhood, by his odd ways of locking his door and never letting anybody see the inside of his chest!

It may be supposed that this attack did not meet a very amiable response from one used to 'awful rule, supremacy and sway,' and who was conscious that he knew a good deal more of 'orthography, etymology, syntax, and prosody,' than his lecturers, to say nothing of arithmetic and a smattering of surveying. He blustered a good deal, and stood upon his rights, and wondered what business it was of anybody's what he did when school was over; but the old folks stuck to their point with such pertinacity, that Mr. Ball at length

found nothing would clear his fame but exhibiting the contents of the fatal chest.

So he marched Mr. Entwistle and the deacon in solemn array up to his room, and as soon as they were inside the door, turned the key and put it in his pocket, thereby occasioning some ill-disguised alarm on the part of the deacon, who expected nothing less than pistols, or some other awful engine of destruction, to pop up when the chest should open.

'Now, gentlemen,' said Mr. Ball, with more than his usual swagger, 'your doubts shall be set at rest; but, remember, that I leave your district on Monday morning, and you may find who you will to keep your school.'

Mr. Entwistle paused a little upon this, and would have restrained his more zealous companion; but curiosity had so far the better of the deacon's prudence, that he declared he felt it his duty to go on. Whereupon the schoolmaster unlocked the mysterious chest, and displayed a very scanty amount of shirts and stockings, with a prodigious pile of James's novels, and a file or two of newspapers; a phrenological head, a few candles, and a bottle of blacking with brushes!

And this was all! The examiners stood looking down into the half empty abyss; and, we will hope, experienced some compunctious visitings; but they owned nothing of the kind. Mr. Entwistle professed himself satisfied, and was about to withdraw, when he was recalled by an exclamation from the deacon, who had taken up some of the papers.

'A Univarsal paper!' he cried, as if horrified by the very sight. 'A Univarsal paper! Would you read such things as that? Pretty thing for a school-teacher I *should* think! For my part I would rather there should never be a teacher in the place than to

have a Univarsaler! *My* children should never have gone a day, if I'd a know'd it!'

Whether the deacon's pious indignation was entirely genuine and spontaneous, or whether it was called up to cover what he felt to be a ridiculous position, must be left doubtful. It served his turn, by causing Mr. Ball's angry departure to be attended by a cloud of odium, raised by those who, professing no religion at all, were still willing to embrace any opportunity of siding with those who did—that being the popular tone in our particular part of the country. It was not difficult to have it understood, that having observed cause of suspicion, Deacon Bradley had found ample explanation of Mr. Ball's conduct in the papers and other things found in the mysterious chest, upon the particulars of which a prudent silence was observed by the parties concerned.

Unfortunately for Mr. Ball's reputation, in less than a week from the time he left us, the schoolhouse was burnt down; and as it had been closed from his departure, it seemed the easiest thing in the world to suppose that he and his revenge were at the bottom of the accident. The few friends left among us by that overbearing dignitary, thought, but hardly dared to say, that, as far as probabilities went, it seemed quite as likely that somebody whose intent it was to vilify the schoolmaster had been accessory to the burning, as that Mr. Ball should have come from his place of residence, which was many miles off, to perform the operation, under a thousand chances of detection. Another doubtful point.

After this disaster, the funds being low, Mr. Henry offered to let his upper chamber for the temporary use of the district, leaving the building of a new school-house until after harvest, when contributions of money and labor would be much more readily obtained.

So Miss Wealthy Turner was forthwith established in a huge, unfurnished room, with a few temporary seats for the scholars, and a board laid upon two barrels to serve as a writing-table. This afforded some amusement, and so aided Miss Wealthy to keep order among the refractory imps, though one boy who had lived at 'the East,' earned the ratan by saying that we had a 'high school' now, because it was up stairs; which Miss Wealthy considered an injurious and sarcastic reflection upon the dignity of the establishment. By way of revenging himself, the urchin called her Miss Twister, which coming to her ears brought him another castigation; and parties soon being formed, discord began to shake her scorpion whip over us again. Miss Turner, however, kept her ground; pacified the naughty boy's mother, by netting her a very curious and elaborate cap; and vindicated her authority by such strictness in school, that offences gradually became less frequent, and the interests of learning advanced accordingly.

One occurrence during Miss Turner's reign she would often herself relate with much *gôut*. The floor of the temporary schoolroom, being only of loose boards, afforded much opportunity of observing the doings of Mr. Henry's family, who lived and carried on all domestic operations in the room below; and one day, when Mrs. Henry was making an unusual clatter in cleaning her domicile, and Miss Turner happened to be absent for a short time, the whole school were on their knees, peeping through a wide crack in their floor, in order to enjoy the pleasure of watching Mrs Henry, as she dashed water upon hers. At this very point, while every eye was fixed, and every nose pressed flat, in the desire to enjoy as much stolen pleasure as possible, Miss Wealthy returned, and, taking the enemy at disadvantage, administered a general corrective, before anybody could summon wits enough to stand on the defensive.

The general discomfiture and crest-fallenness of even the boldest may be imagined! and Miss Wealthy Turner's triumph!

It is really astonishing how savage and Herod-like school-keeping makes some people. Miss Wealthy got married not long after this; and some of us thought he was a bold man that took her.

## THE SINGING SCHOOL.

'Music has charms,' unquestionably; we have great authority for defending the proposition against all challengers. What a disquisition we might write upon such a text! but we will not venture upon abstractions. Let us rather apply to facts, and inquire to what amount of effort and sacrifice music not absolutely perfect will induce unsophisticated people to submit; what departures from all-compelling habit will seem tolerable when music is the object; what momentous results may follow when the concord of sweet sounds (aided by the pitch-pipe,) has waked up all the tenderness that ventures to sojourn in the breast of the stout backwoodsman.

People in the country never go in search of music. It comes to them; not from the 'sweet south,' but from the yellow orient, (the land of pumpkins,) in the shape of lank youths, of aspect faintly clerical, wearing black coats on which the rime of age has begun to settle, and 'excellent white' bosoms, curiously wrought—'welked bosoms,' indeed, perhaps typical of the wounds and scars left by the cruel archer who is so busy at singing schools. These 'professors'—a name which they often assume with peculiar propriety—generally carry their breadwinners with them, in the

sole shape of a stout pair of lungs, and a flexile organ—nasal organ we mean—habituated to the modulation of sound. He who brings a flute takes rank accordingly; the happy possessor of a bassviol can afford to beard the minister himself in the choice of tunes. These last do not often enlighten the woodland and prairie regions: they haunt the larger towns, where dignity may hope to find a soil wherein to flourish.

The arrival of the first singing-master in our village was a crisis. The fine arts then dawned upon us, and a genial excitement was the due result. What was ordinary business, except as it earned leisure or money—sweeping and dusting, unless to get the square-room in order for a call—churning, but to make butter for a tea-visit which *might* happen? The girls flew about, as somebody irreverently says, 'like geese before a storm;' the young men looked black as the storm itself, when they thought of the formidable competition that now threatened their influence. Meanwhile, Mr. Fasole was sitting on the counter at the store, telling great things of himself, and asking questions about the neighborhood. The news went by nature's own telegraph, and the remotest corner of the town knew in ample time of the singing-school we were to have at B——.

The school-house was crowded the very first night, and lighted on the individual principle, that is, by each member bringing his own candle. The candlesticks were mostly extemporary—a block of wood with a hole in it, or a little knot of paper, or a scooped turnip—to be held in the hand during the whole evening, since they were not made to stand. The candles seemed, indeed, rather made to run; at least that was what they did, most uncontrollably; but the absorbing interest of the moment was such, that the inconvenience was hardly noticed. Mr. Fasole appeared in

the awful desk, his vermilion head looming out from the blackboard behind him, like the rising moon in the dark sky of autumn. Before him lay a pile of singing-books, which he informed the assembly,—in the course of a few preliminary remarks on music in general and his own music especially,—he had brought with him, merely for their convenience, at one dollar each. At this stage, those who had brought with them Sacred Choirs, and Singer's Assistants, and Vocal Harmonists, that had been heir-looms in the family long before the emigration, looked somewhat blank, and sighed. But Mr. Fasole went on, showing such science, such taste, such utter contempt for all other methods than his own, that the old books disappeared, one by one; dissolving, perhaps, like the candles, but at any rate becoming invisible.

When the class came to be formed, the dollar singing-book proved like a huge rock in the track of a railway; there was no getting over it or round it; it must be tunnelled right through, but how? Would the scientific man take corn,—would he accept shingles,—would butter do,—would eggs pass current? Could the dollar be paid in board or lodging, or washing or sewing? 'An order on the store,'—'my cloth at the fulling-mill,'—'that lot of yarn,'—'our cosset lamb,'—'a panful of maple sugar,'—such were the distincter sounds that rose above the chorus, as each claimed to be excused from paying cash down. Mr. Fasole was wise; he accepted a composition in every case in which he had not privately satisfied himself that the money would be forthcoming at the last pinch, and the class came to order for the first lesson.

We know not what Mr. Hullah's success may be among the cockneys, but with us, 'music for the million' is a serious matter. Contortions dire and sad grimace, and sounds as when a flock of much maligned birds, disturbed from their resting-place by the

road-side, revenge themselves by screaming at the interloper—all were there. But not a muscle of the teacher's face showed that he was the conscious possessor of ears. With looks of unperturbed gravity, he gave the signal to begin—to stop—to stop—to stop again, and begin again. He himself led the panting host, his chin buried deep in his stock, and his eyebrows raised as if to be out of the way of the volume of sound that issued from the mouth that opened like an oyster below. This laborious diligence soon rendered an intermission necessary, and as it had been agreed to do all things with great order and propriety, the master announced that the company were to keep their seats, while water (much needed) should be brought to them; which was done accordingly—the school-pail and tin cup being carried round by one of the stoutest youths, and the refreshing beverage distributed amid much tittering and some pretendedly accidental spillings by the giddier members.

Part second proceeded on a more moderate scale. Some little exhaustion was felt, and the candles being slender, were failing even faster than the strength of the company. Joe Deal's burnt down to his fingers unawares, as he was leaning over to talk to Sarah Giles; and his not very polite or well-considered exclamation thereupon was reprehended with severe dignity by the professor. This caused something of a hiatus in the performance, and it was almost hopeless to restore the order that had reigned before the intermission. The allotted time had not elapsed, however, and a smart rap on the desk recalled public attention. All bent assiduously over the book, and the harmony was about to be renewed, when Ansel Green, who was always an unlucky fellow, set his own huge shock of hair on fire, and illuminated the room with a blaze that reached nearly to the ceiling.

This naturally finished the first meeting; for not only did the

accident create the 'most admired disorder,' but the piteous look, and diving self-abstraction of poor Ansel, brought out irrepressible and continuous laughter that was too much even for Mr. Fasole; though as soon as he could compose his countenance, he assured the company that nothing was more common than for people to burn off all their hair in learning to sing, though he did not think it was necessary.

The fame of our singing-school spread far and wide, and each return of the regular evening brought recruits from distant parts, whose ambition had been awakened by the great accounts industriously circulated of the success of Mr. Fasole. Some of these recruits were by no means raw, and they brought with them settled opinions on certain points connected with church-singing, by no means agreeable to Mr. Fasole. Strange perversion of human nature, that makes discord but too often the result of harmony! Sharps, flats, and naturals are amiable in their place, but in musical quarrels how they jangle! Old tunes and new tunes, particular metres, and minor chords, quick and slow, false and true, everything was theme for difference. It was believed, actually, that one of the new-comers was a singing master in disguise, so 'cunning of fence' did he show himself in all matters relating to the due effect of church music. Poor Mr. Fasole's face grew anxious, till his very hair looked faded, at this invasion of his prerogative. When he could not refute, he sneered; when outgeneralled, he attempted revenge; but, as in all cases, the more angry he grew, the worse his cause prospered. People took sides, as a matter of course, and the wise chose the side whose leader seemed coolest.

But fortune interfered in favor of the lawful occupant of the ground. It came to light, that the insidious foe who had troubled our 'piping times of peace,' was not only a singing-master, but a

married man! a person who had really nothing interesting about him, and who had, from the mere pedagogical infirmity of loving to dictate, taken the trouble to come over and spoil our sport! The faithful grew louder than ever in their praises of Mr. Fasole; the neutrals gave in their allegiance, and even the opposition slipped as quietly as possible back to their old position, striving, by extra docility, to atone for a short defection. For once legitimacy triumphed, and renewed zeal showed itself in utter disregard of the dripping of candles, or even the scorching of hair.

The prettiest girl that attended our singing-meetings was Jane Gordon, the only daughter of a Scotchman who had lately bought a farm in the neighborhood. She was a fair and gentle damsel, soft-spoken and down-looking, but not without a stout will of her own, such as, they *do* say, your very soft-spoken people are apt to have. Indeed, we may argue that to be able at all times to command one's voice down to a given level, requires a pretty strong will, and more self-possession than impetuous people ever can have; and it is well known that blusterers are easier governed than anybody else. Jane Gordon had light hair, too, which hasty observers are apt to consider a sign of a mild and complying temper; but our dear Jane, though a good girl, and a dutiful daughter, had had a good deal of trouble with old Adam, and given her sober parents a good deal too.

So that, by and by, when is was whispered that Jane Gordon was certainly in love with Mr. Fasole, and that Mr. Fasole was at least very attentive to Jane Gordon, the old people felt a good deal troubled. They were prudent, however, and only watched and waited, though quite determined that an itinerant singing-master should not carry off their treasure, to be a mere foot-ball of Fortune, and have.

nor house nor ha',
Nor fire, nor candle-light.

And at every singing-meeting the intimacy between Mr. Fasole and his fair pupil became more apparent, and the faces of the unappropriated damsels longer and longer. The district-schoolmaster, that winter, was a frightful old man, with a face like a death's-head, set off by a pair of huge round-eyed spectacles, so *he* was out of the question, even if he had not had a wife and family to share his sixteen dollars a month. The store-keeper, Squire Hooper's partner, had impudently gone off to the next town for a wife, but a few weeks before; and a young lawyer who talked of settling among us as soon as there was anything to do—(he had an eye on the setting-back of the mill-pond, we suspect)—did nothing but smoke cigars and play checkers on the store-counter, and tell stories of the great doings at the place he had been haunting before he came among us. So the dearth of beaux was stringent, mere farmer-boys being generally too shy to make anything of, until they have bought land and stock, when they begin to look round, with a business eye, for somebody to make butter and cheese. Mr. Fasole, with his knowing air, and a plentiful stock of modest assurance, reigned paramount, 'the cynosure of neighboring eyes.' He 'cut a wide swath,' the young men said, and it may be supposed they owed him no good will.

How matters can remain for any length of time in such an explosive state without an eruption, let philosophers tell. Twice a week, for a whole, long, Western winter, did the singing-school meet regularly at the school-house, and practise the tunes which were to be sung on Sunday; and every Sunday did one or two break-downs attest that improvement in music could not have been the sole object of such persevering industry. Sometimes a bold bass would

be found finishing off, for a bar or two, in happy unconsciousness that its harmonious compeers had ceased to vibrate. Then again, owing to the failure, through timidity or obliviousness, of some main stay, the whole volume of sound would quaver away, trembling into silence or worse, while the minister would shut his eyes, with a look of meek endurance, and wait until Mr. Fasole, frowning, and putting on something of the air with which we jerk up the head of a stumbling horse, could get his unbroken team in order again. Jane Gordon was not very bright at singing, perhaps because she was suffering under that sort of fascination which is apt to make people stupid; and she was often the 'broken tooth and foot out of joiut' at whose door these unlucky accidents were laid by the choir. Mr. Fasole always took her part, however, and told the accuser to 'look at home,' or hinted at some by-gone blunder of the whole class, or declared that Miss Jane evidently had a bad cold—not the first time that a bad cold has served as an apology for singing out of time.

The period for a spring quarterly meeting of one of the leading denominations now drew nigh, and a great gathering was expected. Ministers from far and near, and a numerous baptism in the pond, were looked for. Preparations of all sorts were set on foot, and among the rest, music 'suited to the occasion.' The choice of 'set pieces' and anthems, and new tunes, gave quite a new direction and spur to the musical interest; but Mr. Fasole and Jane Gordon were not forgotten. There was time to watch them, and sing too. Through the whole winter, the singing-master thought proper to see Miss Gordon home, except when it was very cold or stormy, when he modestly withdrew, with an air which said he did not wish his attentions to seem particular. It had become quite a trick with the young men to listen by the roadside, in order to ascertain

whether he did not pop the question somewhere between the school-house and Mr. Gordon's; but the conclusion was, that either he was too discreet to do it, or too cunning to let it be heard, for nothing could ever be distinguished but the most ordinary talk. Nothing could be more obvious, however, than that, whatever were Mr. Fasole's intentions, poor Jane was very much in earnest. She lost all her interest in the village circle, and, too honest and sincere for concealment, only found her spirits when the fascinating singing-master appeared.—He had the magnetizer's power over the whole being of the pupil. The parents observed all this with the greatest uneasiness, and remonstrated with her on the imprudence of her conduct, but in vain. They reminded her that no one knew anything about the singing-master, and that he very probably had at least one wife elsewhere, although it was past the art of man to betray him into any acknowledgement of such incumbrance; but Jane was deaf to all caution, and evidently only waited for the votary of music to make up his mind to ask, before she should courtesy and say yes.

The quarterly meeting came on, and Squire Hooper's big barn was filled to overflowing. A long platform had been erected for the ministers, and rough seats in abundance for the congregation; but every beam, pin, and 'coign of vantage,' was hung with human life, in some shape or other. Such a gathering had not been seen in a long while. In front was placed Mr. Fasole, with Jane Gordon on his left hand. White was his bosom, (outside,) and fiery red his hair and face, as he wrought vehemently in beating time, while he sent out volumes, not to say whole editions, of sound. One could not but conclude that every emotion of his soul must find utterance in the course of the morning's performance, if Jane Gordon only listened aright, which she seemed very well disposed to do. But the concluding hymn was to be the crowning effort. It abound-

ed in fugues—those fatal favorites of country choirs, and had also several solos, which Mr. Fasole had assigned to Jane Gordon, in spite of the angry inuendoes of other pretenders. He had drilled her most perseveringly, and, though not without some misgivings, had succeeded in persuading himself, as well as his pupil, that she would get through these 'tight places' very well, with a little help from him.

When the whole immense assembly rose to listen while the choir performed this 'set piece,' it was with a sound like the rushing of many waters, and poor Jane, notwithstanding the whispered assurances of the master, began to feel her courage oozing out, as woman's courage is apt to do just when it is most wanted. She got through her portion of the harmony with tolerable credit; but when it came to the first solo, it was as if one did take her by the throat, and the sounds died away on her lips. Dread silence ensued, but in a moment, from the other side of the barn, seemingly from a far distant loft, a female voice, clear, distinct, and well trained, took up the recreant strain, and carried it through triumphantly. Then the chorus rose, and, encouraged by this opportune aid, performed their part to admiration—so well, indeed, and with so much enthusiasm, that they did not at first miss the leading of Mr. Fasole. When the solo's turn came, they had time to look round: and while the distant voice once more sent its clear tones meandering among the rafters and through the mows and out of the wide doors, all the class turned to look at the master. There he stood—agape—astare—pale—spiritless—astonished—petrified; his jaw fallen, his nose pinched in, his eyes sunken and hollow and fixed in wild gaze on the dim distance whence issued the potent sound, while poor Jane's fascinated optics gazed nowhere but on him. But before note could be taken of their condition, the chorus must once more join in the

last triumphant burst, for the new auxiliary had inspired them like a heavenly visitant, and they could not attend to sublunary things. They finished in a perfect blaze of glory, the unknown voice sounding far above all others, and carrying its part as independently as Mr. Fasole himself could have done.

'What *is* the matter with the singing-master?' 'Has he got a fit?' 'Is he dying?' was whispered through the crowd as soon as the meeting was dismissed. 'Bring water—whiskey—a fan—oh goodness! what is to be done?'

'Let *me* come to him,' said a powerful voice just at hand; and, as the crowd opened, a tall, masculine woman, of no very prepossessing exterior, made her way to the fainting Orpheus.

'Jedediah!' she exclaimed, giving a stout lift to the drooping head; 'Jedediah! don't you know your own Polly Ann?'

It was Mrs. Fasole—a very promising scholar whom the unhappy teacher had married at the scene of former labors, somewhere in the interior of Illinois, hoping to find her a true help-meet in the professional line. But, discovering to his cost that she understood only one kind of harmony, and that not of the description most valuable in private, he had run away from her and her big brothers, and hoped, in the deep seclusion of still newer regions, to escape her for ever, and pass for that popular person, an agreeable bachelor. Whether he was really villain enough to have intended to marry poor Jane too, we cannot know, but we will charitably hope not; though we are not sure that wantonly to trifle with an innocent girl's affections for the gratification of his vanity was many shades less culpable. The world judges differently, we know, since it makes one offence punishable by law, while the other is considered, in certain circles, rather a good joke than otherwise. But the singing-master and his fearful spouse disappeared, and those who had not joined the class

exulted; while, as far as public demonstration went, we could not see but the singing at meeting fell back to very nearly the old mark, under the auspices of old deacon Ingalls, who has for many years been troubled with a polypus in his nose.

Jane Gordon is a much more sensible girl than she was two years ago, and looks with no little complacency upon Jacob Still, a neighbor's son, who boasts that he can turn a furrow much better than he can a tune.

## A WEDDING IN THE WOODS.

It has been said that one who would retire from the world, should betake himself to a large city. Certain it is that in the country, where everybody seems to feel a personal responsibility for the doings of the neighborhood, nothing is more difficult than to maintain an independent course as to one's own affairs. What is known to be the expressed sentiment of all about you, exercises more or less influence, do what you will; and you are as apt to show your respect for the town-talk by an angry persistence, as by a timid relinquishment of your plans. It certainly requires more philosophy than most country people possess, to live as if the neighbors were cabbages—no difficult attainment in the city.

There was one family near the little village of B——, who were regarded at once with suspicion and a somewhat unwilling respect, from the quiet and original course which they adopted; resolutely following out their own plans, and rarely expressing an opinion as to the doings of their neighbors. Mr. Arnold came to the West with some property, although he was a hard-working farmer; and when he was about to put up his log-house, instead of calling the neighbors together, and having a grand frolic, with plenty of whiskey, at the raising, he quietly hired the requisite number of laborers, and had his house ready for roofing before anybody knew the timbers were hewed.

This caused many a frown, and not a little shaking of the head among the sages of the vicinity, who saw nothing but 'pride'—that unpardonable sin of the woods—in this way of doing things.

Here we must turn a little aside to describe what most of our readers have probably never seen—a veritable log-house—an important affair in western life.

The log-house in which it was our fate first to look western life in the face, was a rather unusually rough one, built when the country was quiet new, before a road was made, or any access beyond a bridle-path through the woods, or, more properly, the 'openings.' Its dimensions were twenty-four feet by eighteen—no great area, but not encroached upon by the chimney, which was carried up outside, after the fashion of what children call a jackstraw house, i. e, with sticks laid in a square, crossing at the corners. The portion of the wall against which leaned this very primitive-looking outlet for the smoke, was composed of a great slab of rough stone; otherwise, all around was wood—a boundless provision for roast pig after Charles Lamb's fashion. The clay with which the stick chimney was lined, fell off, day by day, so that its catching fire in spots was almost a daily occurrence, and continual watchfulness was required, especially in the evening, since a midnight bonfire in the woods is no very uncommon accident. The hearth which belonged to this chimney was quite in keeping; for it was made of rough fragments, split off the boulders which are the only stone to be found in that part of the country; and laid with such indifference to level, that some points were from four to six inches higher than their neighbors. No mantelpiece surmounted this savage fire-place; but a crotched post on one side supported a wooden crane, which swung far enough above the fire not to catch, unless the blaze was more aspiring than ordinary.

On one side of the fire-place was a ladder, leading to the loft above; on the other, a few rough shelves, on which to arrange the household apparatus—so few, that all our previous notions of the incapacity of a log-house had not taught us to reduce our stock low enough. An additional closet, outside the house, proved to be one of the first requisites for a new home; and besides this, a centre-table, which had once done drawing-room duty, was put in requisition as a cupboard, a tablecloth to keep out dust being the substitute for a door.

If the arrangements to be made within this small space of twenty-four by eighteen had been only those of kitchen and dining-room the necessities of back-woods life would have reconciled one to the narrowness of the quarters; but when bed-chamber and nursery were to be crowded into the same area, the packing became almost as difficult as the feat of putting a bushel of lime, a bushel of sand, and eight gallons of water into one and the same bushel measure together, which we had heard of, but never believed until we made our log-house arrangements. However, by the aid of some heavy curtains—a partition which seemed almost all that one could wish, by contrast with the cotton sheets which were in general use for that purpose through the country, at that time—we contrived to make two bed-rooms, each about as large as a steamboat state-room. The loft above afforded floor room for beds, but was not high enough to allow one to stand upright, except in the very centre, under the ridge of the roof.

The floors in this unsophisticated dwelling were of a corresponding simplicity. Heavy oak plank, laid down without nails or fastening of any kind, somewhat warped, and not very closely packed, afforded a footing by no means agreeable, or even secure. To trip in crossing the room, even at a sedate pace, was nothing uncommon;

and the children were continually complaining of the disappearance of their playthings, which slid through the cracks to regions unexplored.

About the middle of the floor was a trap-door, composed of three loose pieces of board, which had to be taken up separately when one would descend into the 'cellar.' This so-called cellar was a hole dug in the earth, without wall, floor, or window; and the only mode of access to it was by the said trap-door, without steps of any kind. The stout damsels who sometimes did us the favor to perform certain domestic offices for our benefit, used to place a hand on each side the trap, and let themselves down with an adventurous swing, returning to the upper air by an exertion of the arms which would be severe for many a man unaccustomed to muscular effort. Such a door as this was of course literally a trap; for as it was necessarily left open while any one was below, stepping down into it unawares was by no means an infrequent accident. So that if there was no Radcliffian mystery about it, there was at least the exciting chance of a broken limb.

This same loose floor, with the open spaces beneath it, had another interesting chance attending it. Strange little noises, like whispers, and occasional movements during the stillness of night, told that we were not the only settlers under the roof; and one fine spring morning, when the sun shone warm and the eaves were trickling with the thaw of a light snow, a beautiful rattlesnake glided out from below the house, and set off for the pond at a very dignified pace. His plans were partially frustrated; for about a foot or so of his tail was cut off before he had proceeded far; but his head took the hint, and inspired the body with such unwonted activity, that we could never ascertain whether he died of mortification or not. Such tenants as this were not to be desired, and we

made a thorough search after the family, but they had not waited a writ of ejectment.

Toads, too, were among our social inmates. They are fond of hopping in, in a neighborly way, during the twilight, and will sit staring and winking at you as if they were tipsy. If you drive them out, they never take offence, but come again very soon, seeming as good-natured as ever. They are very well if you do not tread on them.

The walls of a log-house are of course very rough and uneven; for the logs are laid up unhewn, as probably most of our city readers have observed in pictures. The deep indentations are partially filled with strips of wood, and then plastered with wet clay, which falls off continually, and requires partial renewing every autumn. This clay, in its dry state, gives off incessantly an impalpable dust, which covers and pervades everything; so that the office of housemaid is no sinecure. In addition to this annoyance, the beams not being plastered, soon become worm-eaten, and the worms are not like snails, that stay forever at home—but we will not pursue the subject. Suffice to say, it is inconvenient to have anybody walking about aloft while you sit at dinner.

To go on with our story. After the raising, Mrs. Arnold was ill; and far from having her room thronged with the wise women of the neighborhood, trying as many fumigations, draughts, and 'yarb-drinks,' as would have sufficed to kill nine well women, Mr. Arnold stayed at home from the field, day after day, apparently for no other purpose than to stand guard at her door, letting nobody in besides the doctor and nurse; and comforting the anxiety of the neighbors by assurances that Mrs. Arnold was doing very well. This was a deep offence; and though Mrs. Arnold had recovered, so as to ride out before anybody forgot the slight sufficiently to call to

see her, yet she expressed no surprise or sorrow, but treated her visitors with her usual quiet kindness.

The Arnolds went on prosperously; showing a kind interest at all proper opportunities, and making the worthier neighbors like them, whether they would or no. The reserve which had been set down to pride and ill-will, came to be considered only oddity; and at the period when the wedding took place of which we began to tell, nobody in the whole town was more popular than the Arnold family. Perhaps the growing up of a sweet, comely daughter in the family was an unrecognized element of harmony between the Arnolds and those about them. A young woman who is lovely both in person and character is irresistible everywhere. She is the light of her father's house, the ornament of society, and the point at which the admiration, interest and affection of those about her naturally concentrate. She is in the social circle what the moss-rose is in the garden—of the same general nature with the rest, but half veiled, fresh and delicate; in her very modesty and retiringness outshining all others—the emblem of sweet reserve and innocent pleasure. Our friends, the Arnolds, possessed such a treasure, and they prized her as she deserved. They required of her all womanly duty; but they had her carefully instructed, and watched over her with an intelligent care, which, while it did not interfere with the exercise of her own judgment, guarded her against all the coarseness but too rife in that region.

The fair Lois had long been considered 'on the fence' between two lovers; and, as usual, the affair, though it might be supposed a matter to interest only those immediately concerned, became the especial business of everybody in the neighborhood. Whenever poor Lois walked out she would encounter prying eyes at every window and door, on the watch to discover whom she might meet,

and what direction might be given to her steps. If she turned down the lane that led to old Mr. Gillett's, the world became sure that Frank Gillett was the happy man; if, on the contrary, she kept straight onward to the village, it was to see the handsome storekeeper, Sam Brayton, who had long visited at Mr. Arnold's on Sunday evenings, and was disposed to extend his sittings further into the night than had been the custom of that sober mansion. It was recorded of Sam that he always sat, in pretended unconsciousness of the lateness of the hour, until Mrs. Arnold had put up her knitting with a very audible yawn, and Mr. Arnold had brought in a huge shovel, and a pail of water, in preparation for covering up the fire. Miss Lois, at the same time, becoming very taciturn, and returning only monosyllabic replies to the sallies of her admirer, he was obliged to beat a retreat—a monument of the power of passive resistance. Frank Gillett, on the contrary, had not patience for this sort of blockade. He waylaid Lois sometimes as she was returning from her Uncle Dyer's on horseback; or dashed in, on some pretended errand, in the middle of the forenoon, when Mrs. Arnold was deep in churning, and Lois plying the graceful great wheel in the 'chamber'—a wide space of bare boards above the spacious lower story of Mr. Arnold's log-house. Frank also felt it his duty to keep Lois duly apprized of all the cases of sickness or shocking accidents in the neighborhood; as she was a nice little nurse, and a famous 'watcher'—this last no sinecure in a country village, where the well are often worn out in nightly attendance, in cases of so little importance that city people would not think of requiring such service. When Lois's ministrations in this way were in demand, Frank always came for her, and so saved her father the necessity of going out in the evening—a thing hated by all

hard-working farmers, who usually love to sit dozing in the chimney corner, when they do not go to bed at nightfall.

Lois was a good girl, and a pretty girl, and an only daughter; so it is not wonderful that her hand was considered quite a speculation, and many a wild fellow from some miles' distance had tried to interest her; but her innocence and delicacy were proof against such equivocal courtship. She treated the two 'neebor lads' we have mentioned, with a modest confidence, and avoided, with native tact, giving preference to either—perhaps, because she really felt none. They had grown up together on friendly terms, and as there seemed no particular period at which the young men became lovers, so the fair Lois chose to ignore the fact—though we shrewdly suspect she was not blind to what everybody in the village saw and talked of—the keen though subdued rivalry of Sam Brayton and Frank Gillett.

If the two suitors had been Italians, instead of offsets from the quiet and law-abiding stock of Puritanism, there were not wanting occasions in the course of their pursuit of the prize, when stilettos might have been drawn and blood spilt. But a peaceful education led them rather to seek to gain the point by stratagem; and many a strawberry party, many a sleighing, many a pic-nic (or *barbecue*, as such things are called at the West), did the young people of the neighborhood enjoy, for which they might have thanked Lois Arnold, whoever may have claimed the honor: for our two enamored swains were at their wits' end for some means of interesting this object of their emulation, and overcoming her formidable impartiality.

It was chance, after all, that brought matters to a focus; for Lois was riding out with a party of young people, when her horse took it into his head to run away, and Frank Gillett, in rescuing her from

imminent danger, brought his own life into peril, and was carried home much injured. We will not assert that this brought Lois to decide in his favor; for we have a notion that no love worth having is based on merely accidental causes. But it certainly made evident a preference, which, perhaps, existed previously; and before Frank was quite enough recovered to take his place on the farm again, the story was afloat that Sam Brayton had decidedly 'got the mitten.'

He did not take this very amiably; that would have been quite out of character for a country beau. Writing poetry, or contemplating the stars, is not among the resources of the rejected in a primitive state of society; and the duel—that unanswerable mode of proving one's worth—is hardly known even by name. To talk of 'thrashing'—not the lady, but the accepted swain—is much more characteristic; but Frank Gillett was such a good fellow, and bore his honors with so little of a swell, that even this was hardly feasible; so Brayton bided his time.

When harvest was over, and all the grain safely housed, spring wheat in, and corn ready for husking, Frank had time to be married; and it was decided that Lois Arnold ought to have 'a real wedding.' This implied a regular frolic; a turning the house out of window, and converting incredible quantities of flour and sugar, milk and eggs, into delicacies for the delectation of a wide sweep of country—not to mention dancing *ad libitum*. What toils are undergone! what anxieties experienced! what fingers burnt—in this grand preparation, the muse must not attempt to tell. Some village Homer has yet to sing such feasts for the admiration of after ages.

A very usual mode—we may venture to say *the* usual mode—of binding one's self, for better or for worse, in the western country, is

to have the knot tied by the nearest justice—a form so succinct that one could scarcely wonder, if everybody should forget the whole affair the next hour. The man in authority stands up, with a grave countenance, takes hold of a chair, by which to steady himself while he speaks, and looks straight at the young couple—which last is not to be wondered at, for they are generally quite a spectacle, with their white lips and cheeks of rainbow hue.

So stood Lois Arnold and Frank Gillett before Squire Millard; Lois in a dress of soft silvery looking silk, with a white rose in her hair and another in her hand; and Frank, with his fine athletic person set out in a white waistcoat for the occasion, and his face looking anything but pale. Even Lois seemed more inclined to laugh than cry, and some young ladies whispered—'She don't mind it a bit!'

What was the surprise of the company, when the Squire, after a vain effort to command his countenance, said—

'I certify that Francis Gillett and Lois Arnold were lawfully married a week ago.'

After this announcement Squire Millard made good his retreat, not being a dancer, and having, moreover, a vague fear that he might be torn to pieces in the frantic demonstrations of surprise which succeeded the first pause—such a pause as ensues upon an unusually heavy clap of thunder.

Everybody stood aghast, at first, as if some great wrong had been committed; and after the grand surprise was over, and the amiables of the neighborhood had joined in the dance with new zest in consequence of the stir occasioned by the *dénouement*, a few disaffected young men—Sam Brayton and his friends—still stood aloof, and whispered in corners, casting now and then a look at the newly-married couple that was anything but friendly. They knew

very well that the thing was a trick to avoid certain annoyances, which are not uncommon on wedding-occasions in the country, when anybody feels aggrieved by the circumstances of the marriage. If the right people are not invited; or if the match is so disproportioned in age as to excite the indignation of the sovereign people; or if some old bluebeard takes a third helpmate—any of these causes, or even less, is sufficient to excuse a sort of row, which is kept up for hours under the windows, or until those concerned open the doors and 'treat.'

It was plain enough that the party, who espoused the cause of mitten-holder, did not mean to be cheated of their *charivari;* but the dancing went on, and the hilarity of the occasion continued unbroken, until eleven o'clock, when the company dropped off, a wagon full at a time, till at length all was quiet, and no sign of life was left about the premises, except a light or two, burning dimly in the house.

Then began the din. Bells, guns, drums, tin horns, whistles, frying pans, and shovels, aided the unearthly howlings of the performers, until the neighbors a mile off heard the disturbance, and the owls in the woods hooted in concert. This went on for an hour or two, but there were no signs of capitulation on the part of the fortress. The lights burned on as quietly as ever, and not a sound could be heard, though Sam Brayton laid his ear to the window, and listened with all his might. Further demonstrations were now judged advisable, and a bunch of thick rods was procured, with which the assailants beat against the house itself, which being partly boarded, made a prodigious reverberation. Still no door opened. Guns were fired as near the windows as possible, pebbles were thrown down the chimney, and a pig hung by the leg to the latch of the door; but no remonstrance was heard. By this time,

the night had so far waned that some symptoms of dawn began to be observable in the east, and the conspirators, weary and disappointed, began to talk of going home to bed.

'I've worked harder than I ever did in harvest,' said one.

'Harvest!' exclaimed another. 'Thrashin' time 's nothing to it! Let's go home!'

'Stop a minute,' said Sam Brayton, stung at the ill success of his plans; 'I'll make 'em come out, yet!' and with the word he threw a large stone at the upper window, with force enough to break it, sash and all, but not to endanger those within.

Upon the accomplishment of this feat, the whole party fled, for the 'law' has great terrors for the backwoodsman, though he inflicts it upon others with small provocation. Every one ran home, and crept into bed as quietly as possible, lest the offence should be fastened on him, which would have brought double punishment of expense and mortification—so complete was the failure.

In spite of all these precautions, however, the matter was brought home to Sam Brayton so undeniably that he was glad to repair the damage to avoid worse consequences; and it was not till afterwards he discovered that, anticipating annoyance, the whole Arnold family, including bride and bridegroom, had slipped off that night quietly with the guests, and gone up to lodge at Uncle Dyer's.